DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 197 CG 014 649

AUTHOR	Ryrie, A. C.: And Others
TITLE	Choices and Chances: A Study of Pupils' Choices and Future Career Intentions.
INSTITUTION	Hodder and Stroughton, Ltd., Kent (Great Britain).
SPONS AGENCY	Scottish Council for Research in Education.; Scottish Education Dept., Edinburgh.
PUB DATE	79
NOTE	147p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Scottish Council for Research in Education, 15 St. John Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8JR, Scotland
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adolescents; *Career Choice; Career Development; *Decision Making; Expectation; Foreign Countries; High Schools; Parent School Relationship; Participant Characteristics; *School Guidance; *Secondary Education; Secondary School Curriculum; *Student Educational Objectives
IDENTIFIERS	*Scotland

ABSTRACT

This book is the first result of a research project involving a study of the process by which young people move through secondary school into work or advanced education. The process of subject choice which takes place at the end of the second year of the Scottish secondary system and the students' intentions for the future, at this stage, are discussed. A presentation of recent developments affecting schooling includes the development of comprehensive education, a more varied curriculum, the raising of the minimum school leaving age to 16 and the use of guidance. Developments in society outside the school are also described. The conditions of the research project are presented, including sample characteristics and a description of the eight schools involved. Procedures for subject choice are outlined for each of the schools, and tables which illustrate subjects chosen by the students are shown. Future expectations of the students at age 14 are described and compared. Finally, a discussion is presented on the significance of school assessment of student ability, curriculum provisions for academically disadvantaged students, significance of curriculum choice, parent-school relationships, and the need for student guidance services . (NRB)

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CHOICES AND CHANCES

A Study of Pupils' Subject Choices and Future Career Intentions

BY

A C RYRIE, A FURST, and M LAUDER

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Hodder and Stoughton
London Sydney Auckland Toronto
for
The Scottish Council for Research in Education

SCRE Publication 71

ISBN 0 340 24992 7 (boards)
0 340 24993 5 (limp)

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Printed and bound in Great Britain for Hodder & Stoughton Educational, a division of Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, Mill Road, Dunton Green, Sevenoaks, Kent, by Lindsay & Co Ltd, 16 Orwell Terrace, Edinburgh EH11 2EU.

CONTENTS

		Page
Preface		iii
Chapter 1	Some Recent Developments Affecting Schooling	1
Chapter 2	Different Places, Different Schools	11
Chapter 3	Deciding the Subjects	31
Chapter 4	Future Expectations	89
Chapter 5	Pupils, Parents and the School	126
Bibliography		137
Index		139

PREFACE

This book is the first result of a research project entitled 'Awareness of Opportunity'. The project involves a study of the process by which young people move through the later stages of secondary schooling and into work or further education. This volume deals only into the first part of the work of the project. In it we discuss the process of subject choice which takes place at the end of the second year of the Scottish secondary system, and the intentions for the future of the young people at this stage. We hope in a later publication to examine what happened to the same young people as they moved through and out of the schooling process.

It will be obvious that many people have contributed to the project in a variety of ways. We owe a great debt of thanks to the headteachers and members of staff of the schools in which the study was done, to the parents who spoke freely to us about their children, and not least to the young people themselves who responded so willingly to our enquiries. Special mention must be made of Bet Gordon, our Technical Assistant on whose careful coding and handling of data, much of the work of the project has depended, and of Diana Murdoch who came in at short notice to help with interviewing when one of the team fell ill. Our thanks are also due to Linda Stark and Sonia Craigie for typing and reproducing copies of the report, to Brenda Stoneham for editorial work, to the Director of the SCRE and the members of our Advisory Committee who read the first draft and made valuable comments.

This project is funded jointly by the Scottish Education Department and the Scottish Council for Research in Education. The financial support of the Department is gratefully acknowledged, although responsibility for the execution of the project rests with the Council and the research team.

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CHAPTER 1

SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING SCHOOLING

The process of secondary schooling in Scotland has been undergoing important changes and developments in a number of ways in recent years. Some of these developments have taken place as a direct result of deliberate educational policy decisions. These include the development of comprehensive education, the introduction of a more varied curriculum, the raising of the minimum school leaving age to sixteen, and the organisation of formal systems of guidance. Other developments have taken place as a result of things which have been happening in society beyond the school. Most important of these is the change in the structure of opportunities for young people after they leave school, including the increase in unemployment, the increased variety in further education provision and the new laws concerning sex discrimination.

These developments have not been taking place in isolation from each other, but have been affecting secondary schools all at once. It is, therefore, impossible to analyse or discuss the effects of any of them entirely on its own, and it is important to understand that together they have contributed to the current situation in Scottish secondary schooling which forms the background to this study. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity it will be useful to look at each of these developments in turn.

The proposal to develop the system of secondary education along comprehensive lines was set out in a Government Circular in 1965 (SED 1965). In the system that prevailed until that time a process of selection took place at the end of primary schooling, and pupils went either to senior or to junior secondary schools. In some rural areas, however, those selected for senior and junior secondary education formed two streams within a single 'omnibus' school. The change to comprehensive education has meant that children now arrive at secondary school undifferentiated; and comprehensive schools (with a few exceptions) make no attempt to differentiate between pupils of different abilities during the first year. The change to comprehensive education took place partly because many people were dissatisfied

with the sorting process at the end of primary school, on the grounds that it was unfair, inflexible and done too early. But the abolition of the selective system has not meant that the process of differentiation, or sorting into various categories or types, has ceased within secondary schools. Indeed, in our society, and given the prevailing assumptions as to the nature and purpose of education and schooling, it is impossible to imagine a school system which does not have some means of sorting pupils and allocating them to different routes through the system. For the sorting of undifferentiated groups of children who enter the education system in such a way that they can occupy various positions at different levels of society, is one of the functions which schools are expected to perform (Hopper 1968, Shipman 1975, Davies 1976, Eggleston 1977). It is worth noting that this means that schools have to perform not only the function of putting some on the route to high positions, but also that of putting others on the route to low positions with little prospect of upward movement (Hopper 1971, Lawton 1975). Any idea that a comprehensive system would do away with differentiation of pupils has, in fact, been shown by empirical studies to be untenable. For example in an early study Julienne Ford reached the conclusion that "selection and the consequent differentiation of courses still occurs under the comprehensive system, children are not sent to different schools, but the sheep are still sorted from the goats" (Ford 1969 p133; see also Robertson 1970, Ross *et al* 1972). Thus the question is not whether pupils are sorted and allocated to different routes by the schools, but when and how this is done.

Although the process of differentiating is no longer begun in a formal way at the end of primary school, and is postponed during the first year of secondary school during which pupils are usually in 'mixed ability' classes, it is still done at later stages of schooling. Many schools in Scotland make some divisions amongst pupils during their second year of secondary schooling. But the principal point at which the sorting is done is at the end of their second year. At this time the common course which has been followed by almost all pupils gives way to a varied pattern of courses and subjects, many of them preparing pupils for Scottish Certificate of Education examinations. So at the end of second year subjects must be chosen for study during the third and fourth years. This process of 'subject choice', or course decision (as it may more appropriately be called) which is carried out usually during the final term of the second year, represents the first major sorting of pupils within the comprehensive system.

One further result of the abolition of the selection at the end of primary school is that the sorting procedures are less obvious, visible and public than they were previously (Ford 1969). In addition, the

fact that the procedures carried out at the end of second year are referred to as 'subject choice', places the emphasis on choice rather than on allocation to levels or streams, and individual subjects rather than broad courses. Thus it is not immediately obvious that the procedures in question do involve a greater or lesser degree of sorting of pupils. This makes it particularly important to take a critical look at these course decision procedures as they operate in various schools, with a view to understanding the part they play in the sorting or differentiating of pupils as they move through the school.

The second important development of recent years has to do with the curriculum. In the Scottish education system the curriculum offered by secondary schools throughout the country has been very similar, and by tradition has had a bias towards academic subjects on the one hand and towards general (i.e. non-specialised) or broad education on the other. In recent years, however, new and more varied subjects have been introduced into the curriculum. This has happened partly as a result of the development of comprehensive education. But the change to the comprehensive system has also brought new problems and questions in connection with the curriculum. One of the main reasons for the introduction of the comprehensive system had to do with equality and social justice. It was argued that comprehensive schools would offer more equal opportunities to all young people. More recently, however, it has been recognised that a concern for social justice must involve not only questions of school organisation but also questions about what is taught to whom within the schools, that is, questions about the curriculum (Young 1971, Lawton 1973, Eggleston 1977). The process of sorting, differentiating or streaming that goes on within comprehensive schools means not only that young people emerge from school with different qualifications (or lack of them) but also that they are taught different things as they move through school. Thus the central question is (in the words of Lawton): "To what extent is it fair that some children should be denied access to certain kinds of knowledge?" (Lawton 1973, p 126).

The moral concern lying behind such a question has been one of the factors contributing to the recent movement in favour of a "core curriculum" which would be followed by all pupils. In Scotland the idea of a core curriculum came to the fore in a special way with the publication in 1977 of the 'Munn Report' on *The Structure of the Curriculum in the Third and Fourth Years of the Scottish Secondary School.* This report recommended that the curriculum in all secondary schools should consist of a 'core area' subdivided into seven subject areas, together with an 'elective area' which would include a variety of subjects, not necessarily the same in every school.

This new emphasis on the curriculum points again to the

importance of examining the process of course decision at the end of second year. For this is the main point during the process of secondary schooling at which curricular decisions are made. It will be useful, therefore, for the sake of future curricular policy, to have a clearer understanding both of how decisions are reached about subjects to be studied in the third and fourth years, and of what is studied by different types of pupils.

The question of the curriculum to be followed by different types of pupils has taken on a new importance since the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen in 1972, the third of the major recent developments referred to above. Since this has come into effect almost all pupils remain at school at least for two (or part of two) sessions after the end of second year. When the decision to raise the leaving age was taken, it was recognised that this would give rise to problems about the curricula to be followed by the less academically able pupils who would otherwise have left when they were fifteen. The question of the kind of education to be offered to young people of this type was, of course, not a new one, and different approaches had been advocated by various people and bodies in the past. The approach recommended by the Brunton Committee was of particular importance in Scotland (SED 1963). This report argued that for pupils who were not following courses leading to SCE exams the vocational impulse ought to be "the core round which the curriculum should be organised", and urged that schools should develop "third year courses providing a broad approach to particular industries". A publication of the Scottish Education Department in 1966, however, suggested that the approach should be broadened and that courses for those not doing certificate work should be aimed at a more general preparation for life. Education of these young people should include not only a vocational element, but also social and moral education and education for leisure (SED 1966). New courses aimed at improving the education of the ROSLA pupils were certainly developed in various schools (SED 1970). But partly because Scottish education is still considerably influenced by its strong academic tradition (Findlay 1973), and perhaps also because of a certain resistance to change amongst the Scots (Richmond 1971) the question of the kind of education to be offered to the non-academic pupils has remained without a complete and convincing answer. The setting up of the Munn Committee to make recommendations about the third and fourth year curriculum is itself evidence of this.

Since, in nearly all Scottish comprehensive schools, pupils follow a largely common course during their first two years, the question of the kind of curriculum to be followed by the non-academic pupils arises in practice at the end of second year at the time of subject choice. In other words, the question of what actually takes place at

this point in the schooling process has a special importance in connection with the non-academic pupils. In view of the continued uncertainty about the most desirable type of education for them, it will be useful to discover in more detail what happens to them during the course decision process: to what extent the courses they are offered differ from those available to the 'more able' pupils; to what extent schools have different approaches to the needs of these pupils; and whether they have the same freedom of choice as others.

The fourth development which has taken place recently has been the establishment of formal systems of guidance in secondary schools. The policy of the Scottish Education Department in connection with guidance was set out in a memorandum entitled *Guidance in Scottish Secondary Schools* in 1968 (SED 1968). In it three main aspects of guidance — personal, vocational and curricular — were outlined, and two principal methods of combining these within a comprehensive system of guidance were suggested — by dividing the school vertically into houses or horizontally into year groups. A later memorandum (SED 1971), proposing changes in the structure of promoted posts in secondary schools, suggested that there should be teams of 'guidance teachers' under the direction of an assistant head teacher. Guidance teachers would continue to teach their own subjects but would be given sufficient non-teaching time to carry out their guidance duties. This arrangement whereby the various aspects of guidance are included together within an overall system, and guidance teachers are appointed to have responsibility for it but not on a full-time basis, has become the established system within Scottish comprehensive schools. Schools vary, however, in the type or organisation — horizontal or vertical or a combination of the two — which they have adopted.

It is important to recognise that the need for a systematic provision of guidance has been felt partly because of the other developments which we have already discussed. The increased size of many schools under the comprehensive system has accentuated the need for arrangements for personal guidance to ensure that individual pupils are known and helped. The raising of the school leaving age has meant that many young people are staying on at school longer than they would otherwise have done, and they are felt to be in particular need of help and support, and sometimes discipline. The increased variety of choice within the curriculum points to the need for more curricular guidance to help pupils make wise choices. Thus the development of guidance systems is seen as going hand-in-hand with the other changes which have been taking place in Scottish secondary education.

Systematic guidance arrangements of the kind outlined by the SED are, therefore, fairly recent developments in Scottish schools.

Thus there is a need for evaluation of the operation of these guidance systems. The literature on guidance is already quite considerable (Reid & McDowell, 1976) but study and evaluation of guidance in Scotland has only recently been begun (SED 1976, Miller 1976 and Smith 1977). In this connection it is important to recognise that there is scope for individual schools to develop and use the guidance system in their own way, and that evaluation of guidance must include case-studies of particular schools as well as more general surveys. Furthermore, the need for and the use made of guidance may be different at different points in the schooling process. Here again the importance of the subject choice period at the end of second year stands out. Since this is the time when crucial decisions are made about subjects to be studied and possibly about future careers, and when young people are being asked to think about their own future, there is special need for curricular, vocational and possibly personal guidance at this time. Thus it will be useful to enquire into how the guidance system is operating in particular schools in connection with the transition from second to third year in the Scottish system.

The developments which have been discussed so far have all taken place within the secondary school system. The environment within which the process of schooling is conducted has, however, also been changing in recent years in ways which have affected schools. One aspect of this change, in particular, calls for attention here, since it has a bearing on the decisions made by or for young people about their future. This is the change in the nature of the opportunities available to young people when they leave school and seek employment.

The question of the transfer from school to work has become the focus of a great deal of attention recently in debates, discussions, writings and research to do with education. Helping young people to find appropriate jobs, instead of leaving them to sink or swim in the world of work, was the main initial object. Gradually, however, it came to be realised that helping young people with the transition from school to work involved more than helping them to find a job after they left. The focus enlarged to include occupational choice and the whole field of careers guidance. This came to be seen as a task to be done within the school, as an aspect of the preparation of young people for life beyond school. Subsequently careers guidance has been broadened in scope and extended to cover a longer period of time. It has been broadened to include not only help with choosing an appropriate occupation, but also general preparation for working life, and sometimes the preparation of young people in all kinds of ways for life after they have left school (Law and Watts 1977). In some places it has also been extended so that it is made available not only to those young people who are about to leave school, but to

pupils at all stages of secondary schooling from their first year until they leave. In this way 'careers guidance' has been developing into 'careers education', and is frequently seen as an integral part of the work of the school. While this has not happened uniformly in all schools, the importance of some form of careers guidance or careers education in connection with the transition from second to third year is now widely recognised.

It is one thing, however, to emphasise the importance of offering careers guidance to pupils at the time of subject choice, but it is another to be clear about the basis on which this should be done. As things are at the moment it is not clear to what extent and in what circumstances it is wise for pupils at the age of fourteen to choose subjects with a view of entering a particular career of occupation. This is because it is difficult to know what weight or credibility should be attached to the intentions and aspirations of boys and girls of that age. Are they to be taken seriously as reliable indicators of their probable future career, or should they be seen as passing notions or fancies? The way in which careers guidance is related to subject choice at the end of second year depends on explicit or implicit answers to these questions.

The question of employment has raised some further issues for schools in recent years. There has been a growing realisation that the task of helping young people to prepare for work and for life after school must be done in a way which takes account of the actual structure and nature of opportunities likely to be available to them after they leave. A number of writers (Roberts 1974, Roberts 1977, Allen 1976, Haystead 1975) have shown that whatever their earlier intentions or the nature of the guidance they have received, many school leavers in fact take whatever job is available. 'Occupational choice' in any way that involves a variety of options or freedom of choice may in reality be available only to a certain proportion of young people. This issue has been sharpened by the recent dramatic increase in the numbers of unemployed school leavers. This raises an uneasy question about the work of careers education and careers guidance. To what extent should careers education aim to broaden horizons and encourage young people to think with open minds about a wide variety of possible careers or occupations? And to what extent should it attempt to bring home to them the nature and structure of actual opportunities in their locality, with all the limitations that are sometimes involved? As the work of careers guidance and education extends earlier in the process of schooling, and as it increasingly becomes an aspect of the process of subject choice at the end of second year, these issues call out more loudly for resolution.

A further way in which the world beyond school is affecting the

process of schooling and decision-making in schools is through the development and proliferation of a variety of courses in further education and other colleges. The numbers of students on full-time or sandwich courses in vocational further education in Scotland increased by nearly sixty per cent between 1970 and 1976. These figures reflect a sizeable increase in the number and type of courses which are available, some of them preparing students for new and developing occupations. Since nearly all these courses have minimum qualifications which are required for entry, it is increasingly important for many young people to secure these qualifications. The opportunity to achieve them within the school system depends to a considerable extent on decisions made at the end of second year about courses and subjects. For this purpose relevant and appropriate information about further education must be made available to pupils at this time. In other words changes and developments in the field of post-school education similarly point to the importance of the course decision process at the end of the second year of secondary schooling.

There remains one further development in the world beyond school which has considerable implications for the process and routes by which young people move through school. This is the passing of legislation concerning equal opportunities for both sexes. Under this legislation men and women officially have equal opportunities to enter almost any type of employment, with equal remuneration. Since it is clear that during the process of schooling young people are sorted in ways which affect their future positions and careers, are given careers education and guidance which may have a direct or indirect effect on their eventual occupation, and are given an opportunity to choose subjects which may open or close doors into opportunities after school, it is crucial to the achievement of the purpose of the legislation that schools should not discriminate between sexes in the way they perform these functions. Indeed, it is important that schools should actively work to remove prejudice and the traditional foundations of discrimination. Thus the questions arise: are our schools in fact offering the same and equal opportunities to both girls and boys in the options made available? and do the schools' guidance procedures encourage girls and boys to believe that all opportunities will be equally available to them when they leave school? or could it be that in spite of the legislation girls and boys are still being channelled in different directions, deliberately or otherwise, by the process of schooling?

This brief review of some of the major developments affecting Scottish secondary schooling in recent years is, perhaps, sufficient to indicate the central or crucial significance for the process of schooling of the course decision procedures at the end of second year. This is the

point within the comprehensive school system when the major sorting of pupils is carried out, and where the major curricular decisions affecting individual pupils are made. It is the time when pupils are encouraged to look ahead and think of their future and when questions about jobs and further education begin to be raised. It is the point at which curricular and vocational guidance is considered to be of the greatest importance. This process of transfer from second to third year is in fact the pivot of the secondary school system.

If this is so, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to this transfer period by educationists or those interested in education. There is one major study of subject choice at this stage (Reid *et al* 1974), which offers a useful discussion and analysis of the curricula and the guidance systems within selected schools in England, of the way pupils made their choices, and of the part played by parents. But it offers no critical discussions of the significance of course decision at this stage in the process of secondary schooling, nor of the extent of real freedom of choice for different types of pupils. A critical discussion of freedom of choice is to be found in an article by Woods (1976), while various other writers about schools and school leavers point to the significance of subject choice in other ways. None of this, however, does justice to the importance of the course decision process at this stage of schooling.

It is clear that no complete and adequate account of the significance of this process can be given without examining the implications of the choices and decisions made for the later development and careers of the young people. It is intended that this should be done in a later report on the current research project. Meanwhile, in this volume we attempt to examine and shed some light on both the process of subject choice as it is carried out in a number of Scottish schools, and also the aspirations and intentions for the future of the young people at that stage. In doing so we ask and try to answer a number of questions. These include: what were the characteristics of the guidance systems in the various schools? how was the process of subject choice organised and carried out? who made the choices or decisions, and on what basis? what was the role of parents, guidance teachers and others in the decision-making process? to what extent was there real freedom of choice, and did it vary with the school or with the type of pupil? what differences were there in the third year curricula or time-tables of pupils of varying abilities and different sexes? what were the expectations of the pupils at this stage with regard to leaving school, getting a job and going on to further or higher education? what were these expectations based on, and how were they related to the subject choice process? to what extent were they aware of opportunities after school?

Our concern throughout the current project is with the process of schooling — with young people moving through school, the influences on them as they do so, and the various routes they follow within the process. Our aim in this book is to take a critical look at course decision procedures and the transfer from second to third year, with a view to understanding their place in the process of schooling.

CHAPTER 2

DIFFERENT PLACES, DIFFERENT SCHOOLS

The project on which this book is based has at least five main characteristics. The first is that it is a longitudinal study involving the follow-up of two separate random samples of young people in eight comprehensive schools in Scotland. The samples consisted of 74 (37 boys and 37 girls) in each school in each of two successive year groups. The first sample reached the end of their second year in the summer term of 1976, and the second a year later. Thus there were nearly 600 pupils in each sample chosen at random from the whole range of assessed ability. The project involved interviewing all these pupils at different stages until after they left school, and gathering information of various types about their routes and progress through school.

Secondly, a close study has been made of the schools themselves. Members of the research team have been in constant touch with the schools over a long period, gathering information of a formal and informal nature about the procedures adopted by the schools, the nature and structure of the guidance systems and other relevant topics. Thus, in addition to being a longitudinal study, the project is also a case-study of a number of particular schools.

Thirdly, an attempt has been made to obtain and understand the perspective or viewpoint of a variety of people who are in different ways involved in the process of young people moving through school. Interviews have been carried out not only with the pupils, but also with the parents of all of them, with teachers (head teachers, assistant heads, guidance teachers, and a random sample of others), and with careers officers. The assumption is that looking at the process through the eyes of many different people would give a clearer and more balanced picture.

Fourthly, the eight schools are located in two distinct and different areas. Four of them are in north Lanarkshire, an urban industrial area close to Glasgow, and four in the Borders, a scattered rural and small town area. This has been arranged in order to allow a study to be made of the different types of opportunities actually available to

school leavers in the areas. Information gathered about the processes of schooling and decision-making in schools can then be related to this opportunity structure.

Lastly, the project has included an attempt to work with both qualitative and descriptive information on the one hand, and numerical or quantitative material on the other. The size of the samples has made some statistical analysis possible, and indeed necessary. The numerical information has, however, been used along with qualitative material in such a way that questions arising from one type of data can be tested against data of the other type.

The overall intention of the project is to provide a descriptive and illuminative analysis of the process of moving through the later stages of school, and to see this process in as full a perspective as possible. For this purpose information of a number of different types and covering successive stages of the process has been obtained from a variety of sources and analysed in more than one way. A discussion of the later stages of the process and of the implications of decisions made during school for developments after school must await a later report. In the following chapters we will be looking at the process of course decision at the end of second year, as this is seen by pupils, teachers and parents. We will be considering the differences in the procedures adopted by the eight schools, and examining the subjects chosen and the resultant third year curricula. We will also be considering the ideas which the young people had at this stage about their own future, and their understanding of the opportunities available to them.

The interviews with the pupils were carried out in the summer term of their second year. During this term the subject choice process was being carried out in all the schools. The amount of time taken to complete the process and the number of stages involved varied from one school to another. Since the programme of interviews extended over a number of weeks this inevitably meant that pupils were interviewed at varying points in the process — a fact which needs to be borne in mind in interpreting the interview responses. The parents of the pupils were visited in their homes during the late summer or autumn of the same year, when their children had entered third year. All these interviews were semi-structured, allowing both numerical and qualitative analysis. Many of the parents, in particular, spoke at length about their children's schooling in a way that gave insight and understanding far beyond anything that could be coded. A first round of almost completely open-ended interviews with guidance teachers and a random sample of other teachers also yielded valuable understandings. A later series of interviews with principal teachers of subjects was structured to produce more precise information about practices and procedures within subject departments. All of this,

together with the gathering of factual details about the pupils' routes and progress through school yielded a vast amount of information. In the chapters which follow we have not attempted to present the bulk of this information to the reader, but rather to offer a description of this stage of schooling, with only the minimum of data required to support the points being made. For the purposes of this report, which offers a description of one stage of the schooling process and does not take account of outcomes of the process, we have done little in the way of statistical analysis. We do draw attention, however, to differences in the frequencies of responses of various categories of respondents, and to associations between variables. All such differences and associations referred to in the text have been tested for statistical significance using the chi-square test, and have been found to be significant at the five percent level or better. Before presenting this information, however, we give in the rest of this chapter a description of the areas in which the project has been carried out, of the schools and their guidance systems, and of the young people who fell into our samples.

The Lanarkshire Schools

The first four schools in our study are in north Lanarkshire. This is an industrial area, with a number of urban communities very close to each other, all of them within a few miles of the city of Glasgow. The area has a tradition of heavy industry. At one time there were large numbers of coal mines, and many of the older men once worked in the pits. All but one or two of these pits have, however, been closed. Steel has remained the traditional heavy industry of the area, but this too has been declining in recent years. There is now an increasing variety of types of industry and employment. Electronics and light engineering factories have been recruiting semi-skilled workers, including an increasing number of women. And, as in other places, there has been an increase in the numbers employed in offices and service industries. Though the number of white-collar workers has grown, there are few traditionally middle class or professional families. In spite of the increased variety of employment, unemployment has been high, remaining constantly at a figure above the Scottish average.

Many people, especially men, travel from their own home towns to work in neighbouring towns or in Glasgow. At the time of the 1971 Census only one of the urban communities in the area provided employment for the majority of its own male residents. Opportunities for tertiary education are quite favourable. There are two colleges in the area offering non-advanced further education courses, and one offering advanced courses, and there is also a college of education. Many students also travel to universities and colleges in Glasgow.

The population of the area as a whole is very largely working class, with most families living in council houses. Some of this council housing is new and of good amenity, but in some parts of the area there is considerable and multiple deprivation.

In order to facilitate the work of the project two towns within this area were selected, and two schools were chosen in each of these towns. The town where schools 1 and 2 are situated has less industry and is more residential than most of its neighbours. There are large estates of council houses, but also some older private houses. And in recent years a large number of new private owner-occupied houses have been built, with the result that the proportion of professional, managerial and other non-manual workers is relatively high. There is also more employment in offices and shops than in the rest of the area.

School 1 is a large non-denominational school, which before the change to comprehensive education was a selective senior secondary with a strong academic tradition. In 1972 it was united with a nearby four-year secondary to form a single comprehensive school using both buildings. The school roll in 1977-78 was nearly 1700, but it had been larger in previous years. The area served by the school includes some older residential districts and some newer private housing as well as council housing estates. Thus there are more children of middle class families at this school than at most of the others in our study. The 'split-site' which the school now occupies poses considerable problems for the school since it means that both pupils and staff have to come and go between the two buildings, across a busy street.

When formal guidance systems were first introduced, School 1 along with the other large comprehensive schools in Lanarkshire adopted a vertical house system. There are six houses, and two guidance teachers are attached to each house, with an assistant head teacher having overall responsibility for guidance. In addition to this vertical structure there is also a horizontal division into 'lower school' (first and second years), 'middle school' (third and fourth years) and 'upper school' (fifth and sixth years) – an arrangement found in most of the other schools as well. Three assistant head teachers have administrative responsibility as heads of these three 'schools' respectively. All three are involved to some extent in the guidance of pupils, along with the designated guidance staff. The heads of lower and middle school, in particular, have responsibilities in connection with subject choice and the third year time-table, and pupils frequently consult them in this connection.

The guidance system in School 1 is characterized by detailed and systematic procedures. The assistant head teacher who had responsibility for guidance at the time of the research was very

knowledgeable in all matters concerned with guidance, and has made impressive arrangements. Special new premises, which are adequate if rather remote from some parts of the school, have been provided. A system has been developed for the keeping of detailed records, which are housed in the guidance rooms. Considerable emphasis is placed on the keeping of these records and on other formal procedures. This attempt to organize an efficient system has inevitably meant that time has been taken away from other guidance work. Guidance teachers in this school were particularly conscious of the burden of paper work, and of the lack of sufficient time to carry out the desired amount of individual interviewing of pupils. Another characteristic of guidance in this school is the arrangement for social education, for which an elaborate programme has been drawn up, covering a wide range of topics. Social education takes place in 'tutor groups', which are small subdivisions of houses. All members of staff are involved in the leadership of these groups. This means that they all require to have an understanding of and a commitment to the principles and practice of guidance and social education if the system is to work successfully. The social education programme for the second year includes material on careers, two visits to the careers library, and talks by the careers officer, as well as material on subject choice. As far as personal guidance is concerned, an attempt is made by the guidance staff to have an individual interview with each first year pupil, and to see others individually when school reports are handed out.

School 2 is the other non-denominational school in the same town as School 1. Its catchment area includes both large council housing estates and fairly new and growing estates of private houses. While the majority of the children in the school come from working-class homes, there is a considerable number whose parents are in managerial or other white-collar occupations. Many of these families are upwardly mobile. Before comprehensive education was introduced this was a junior secondary school, which had been purpose built to provide opportunities for developing appropriate and experimental junior secondary work. Since it has been made comprehensive new buildings have been added, but the school has remained relatively compact. The school roll has been growing as the first fully comprehensive intake has moved up the school, and by 1977-78 when this intake had reached the sixth year the roll was approximately 1400.

Unlike most schools in Lanarkshire, School 2 has never had a vertical guidance system. Its small size at the time when formal guidance systems were inaugurated made this inappropriate. The horizontal system established then has been retained by the school, with guidance staff moving up with their pupils. The head teacher believes strongly that the welfare of the pupils should be a concern of

the school as a whole, and he himself is frequently involved in matters connected with the well-being of pupils and relations with parents. An assistant head teacher for guidance was appointed for the first time in 1976, (the school was too small to justify such an appointment before then) and up to that time guidance was not highly organised in the school. Since then guidance has been hindered by the lack of any special accommodation for guidance staff. Nevertheless an elaborate programme of social education has been developed, which includes some material on careers during the second year. A formal system of communication in relation to guidance — referrals, enquiries, etc — has also been developed, but its use has been limited because of easy personal contact between members of staff.

In general it would appear that guidance staff, at the time of the research, did not play as prominent a part in the life of School 2 as they did in most others. They did attempt to interview all fourth year school leavers, but were not able to do much more in the way of systematic individual interviewing. Nevertheless this school was in many ways a caring school. The distinctive thing was, however, that much of the pastoral and welfare work of the school was done not through the formal guidance system, but by the head teacher and staff as a whole.

The town in which the other two Lanarkshire schools are situated is one with an old tradition of heavy industry. It has suffered considerably in recent years from the decline of this type of industry, and levels of unemployment have been high, not least amongst the young. The population is overwhelmingly working class (at the time of the 1971 Census only 27% of the males belonged to the non-manual occupational categories). Most live in council houses, whether they be flats in high-rise towers, or older buildings in ageing estates with problems of deprivation.

School 3 is a large Roman Catholic comprehensive school in the middle of the town. Its catchment area includes part of the town and also a number of small outlying communities, most of which were once mining villages. It was originally a selective senior secondary school which maintained a strong academic tradition and emphasis, in spite of the fact that very few of the pupils came from well-educated families. The school occupies a sprawling set of buildings, which are so widely spread out that communication is very difficult. There are three or four staff rooms in different parts of the buildings. One new building has been added to meet the needs of the comprehensive school, and this provides house areas and house dining facilities.

The school has had to face considerable problems in recent years. One of these has been shortage of staff, which has made it difficult to arrange time-tables.

The main organisational response by the school to the difficulties

which have confronted it particularly since it became comprehensive has been to lay a special kind of emphasis on guidance. The structure of the guidance system is similar to that of School 1. It is a vertical system with six houses, and two guidance teachers attached to each house. An assistant head teacher has overall responsibility for guidance. As elsewhere assistant head teachers have been appointed as heads of lower, middle and upper schools. The head teacher has devolved considerable responsibility on to the guidance staff. This, together with the difficulties which the school has to contend with, has given a number of special characteristics to the guidance system in School 3.

The first is that the staff have a particularly wide-ranging responsibility and authority. In the words of the head teacher, "They are pretty important people in this school". They are much involved in disciplinary matters, extra-curricular activities, and in aspects of the school organisation which may not strictly be classified as guidance.

Secondly, the six houses and the guidance staff connected with them have a considerable amount of independence and autonomy. This results in things being done differently in different houses. It applies to the implementation of social education and careers education programmes. Detailed programmes of this kind have been drawn up centrally, but the use that is made of them varies considerably from one house to another.

Thirdly, the guidance teachers in School 3 have found themselves more involved in disciplinary questions than they would like. This was apparent not only from things said by the teachers themselves but also from what pupils said. More pupils in this than in any other school mentioned discipline as the function of guidance teachers.

Fourthly, the guidance teachers tend to have more constant and direct contact with the pupils in their care than is the case in some schools. In spite of their many other responsibilities they manage to conduct a number of personal interviews with pupils, and there is considerable coming and going of pupils at the guidance teachers' rooms. It is also clear that there are members of the guidance staff who care for the children in their house and look after them. Indeed the staff as a whole give an impression both of commitment and of warmth, and of attempting in personal ways to overcome the difficulties of adjustment which the school has been facing.

School 4 is a compact and fairly new school in the middle of a large council housing area in the same town. It was originally built as a junior secondary school, but was changed to a comprehensive in 1974. Its roll in 1977-78 was approximately 1,000. More than any of the others, School 4 is a neighbourhood school, serving a fairly compact community. This community is almost entirely working

class. There are scarcely any professional or managerial families and only a negligible number of owner-occupied homes. While many of the homes are well-kept and prosperous, others show signs of deprivation. Very few of the parents interviewed had ever lived outside the town — fewer than in the case of any of the other schools. A considerable amount of inter-marriage between families in the community has meant that many pupils are related to others in the school. During the last few years School 4 has been a developing and growing school, but there is an awareness on the part of the staff that the school serves a socially limited and somewhat depressed community.

Guidance is organised in a vertical system with four houses. As elsewhere there are also assistant head teachers with responsibility for the lower, middle and upper schools. The head teacher is particularly aware of the importance of guidance. He gives the assistant head teacher responsible for guidance a large measure of autonomy and scope to develop this aspect of the school's life. He in turn has taken considerable trouble to set up an effective system. He has arranged training for guidance teachers, and has prepared statements on objectives and aims, materials for use, and procedures to be followed. Each house has a guidance room. These rooms are in different parts of the building but are well known to pupils, who visit them frequently.

Clearly a great deal of importance and of scope is given to guidance in School 4. But this is not without its dangers. The importance attached to guidance has led to a certain amount of friction between the guidance staff and others, which has made it difficult fully to integrate guidance into the school life. Furthermore, guidance is still hindered by lack of time. Guidance teachers are particularly aware of the need to deal with personal problems because of the nature of the community served by the school. This and the demands of paper work have made it impossible to do the amount of individual interviewing which is thought desirable. Some interviewing of older pupils is done, but the main contact between guidance teachers and younger pupils is during the social education periods. Nevertheless, in School 4 a real attempt has been made to establish an effective guidance system with an emphasis on pastoral care.

Before leaving the Lanarkshire schools it is instructive to make some comparisons. School 4 is in some ways like School 2. Both were originally local junior secondaries, and both have continued to pay attention to the needs of individuals and families in their community. But in School 2 the emphasis is on the responsibility of the school as a whole (including the head teacher) for the welfare of pupils and less importance is attached to the guidance system, whereas in School 4

guidance is especially emphasised, and the guidance staff have a particularly important part to play in welfare or pastoral work.

School 1 and School 3 are also similar in some ways. Both were previously selective senior secondaries, but are now large comprehensives housed in scattered buildings and trying to preserve a sense of unity. In each the guidance system is important. But whereas in School 1 greater emphasis has been placed on the development of efficient and recognised procedures, in School 3 there is a greater amount of direct contact between guidance staff and their pupils.

The Borders Schools

The other four schools which participated in the project were in the Borders Region. The Borders is a largely rural area, with hills in the west and flatter open country in the east. The countryside, which once supported a considerable population, now has far fewer inhabitants. Farms and small communites are, however, found throughout the area, some of them in isolated and remote valleys. The area is also well known for its towns. These are small but old and independent communities, which have thrived for generations largely on the woollen trade.

The nearest city to most of the area is Edinburgh in the north. Distances are long however and public transport is not very convenient. Travelling daily to Edinburgh for work or further education is scarcely possible for most people. Travelling even between towns within the Region is often difficult with the result that most people work in the towns in which they live. This situation contributes to the sense of separateness and independence of the different communities. There are two small further education colleges in the Region, both offering non-advanced courses, and one Central Institution, the Scottish College of Textiles, offering specialised advanced courses in textiles and a variety of business studies courses.

The four schools in our study are located in four different towns. Each is the only secondary school in the town, serving both the town itself and a considerable area round about. They are all schools with a long history, and long before the advent of comprehensive schooling they were "omnibus" schools, catering for children of all abilities within the same establishment. They vary considerably both in size and in other characteristics according to the community they serve.

School 5 is one of the larger ones among the four Borders schools, with a roll of about 1200 in 1977-78. The town in which it is situated has not only a number of woollen mills, but also some other small industrial concerns and a variety of offices, banks and shops. Thus there is a reasonable number of professional and other white-collar

workers, together with a large working class population, predominantly mill-workers and tradesmen. The housing reflects this pattern. There are residential districts, older town-centre areas and big new Council housing estates on the periphery. The school also serves a number of smaller communities of varying sizes, some largely agricultural and some more residential in character.

The school is housed in attractive new buildings opened in 1964. These buildings are fairly compact, with the exception of an annexe in which two or three departments are located. The school originally occupied two older buildings, one for the senior secondary and one for the junior secondary classes.

School 5 has a vertical guidance system with four houses to which pupils are randomly assigned. There are four assistant head teachers who carry considerable responsibility. One of them is responsible both for guidance and for the lower school. In addition to the two guidance teachers attached to each house, there is a principal teacher of guidance with special responsibility for careers work across the whole school. He plays quite a prominent role in the life of the school, and has considerably developed the careers side of guidance work. There is no special accommodation for individual houses but a room is set aside for the use of guidance teachers as a whole. Pupils' records are kept in this room. Systematic contact between guidance teachers and pupils in their houses is largely confined to the occasions when reports are handed out. On these occasions guidance teachers try to talk with individual pupils, but the time and opportunity is limited. At the time when the research project was begun, social education was not available for all pupils. As far as second year pupils were concerned it was limited to those who did no language. Since then an overall social education programme has been arranged, and is carried out by guidance teachers with the help of volunteers from among other teachers.

More than most of the others, School 5 has been changing and developing during the period of the research. In addition to curricular changes there have been attempts to overcome deficiencies in social education, and in guidance, particularly with reference to subject choice and careers guidance.

School 6 is also one of the larger ones in the Borders with a roll of nearly 1400 in 1977-78. It is situated in a town with a large number of woollen mills, and little else in the way of industry or other employment. The mills have remained busy over a long period, however, and employment has therefore been relatively plentiful if limited in scope and variety. Distances make it especially difficult for people to travel to work to other towns and very few do so.* There are

* At the time of the 1971 Census over 95 percent of the employed male residents and over 99 percent of the employed female residents worked in the town itself.

relatively few professional or other white-collar workers. Mill workers make up the larger part of the employed population, most of them living in the Council housing estates which have spread out from the centre of the town. Attempts to attract new industry and population have not been very successful. Most of the residents, therefore, belong originally to the town. There is an air of traditional isolation about the community, and a sense that little has changed.

Most of the pupils (with the exception of a few from a village some twenty miles away) come from the town itself. The school is, therefore, more urban in character than the other Borders schools. It is housed in a traditional old building which has been enlarged and added to, with the result that there is now a spread-out complex of buildings in which communication is sometimes difficult.

In advance of the establishment of guidance systems in Scottish schools generally, School 6 had developed its own well-thought-out system of careers guidance. The need for setting up an overall guidance system was therefore not strongly felt. And even after an overall system had been established, the careers teacher, now officially a principal teacher of guidance, has particular importance and influence. He is keen and active and is well-known among the pupils. He operates throughout the school, largely independently of the rest of the guidance system. The system adopted for guidance generally is a horizontal one. The two guidance teachers attached to each year-group 'roll-up' in such a way that they stay with the same pupils until the end of the fourth year. There is no assistant head teacher with overall responsibility for guidance, but the heads of lower, middle and upper school each have a guidance responsibility, along with the guidance teachers serving the year-groups in their "school". They undertake some of the administrative duties elsewhere done by guidance teachers in order to give to guidance staff more opportunity to know their pupils. There is a special 'guidance area' within the newest of the school buildings, where each guidance teacher has a desk, and space for records, and which includes interview rooms. This area is, however, rather remote from much of the school, and it is not as much used by guidance staff as by the assistant heads. The duties of the guidance teachers are outlined in some detail in the staff manual. The section of guidance in the manual deals at some length with discipline. While they are officially encouraged to interview individual pupils, in practice it is difficult for guidance teachers to find the time to do so. One or two have, however, made special arrangements for seeing pupils and parents outside school hours.

The guidance teachers thus have a somewhat limited role in School 6. The distinctive features of guidance in the school are the special

emphasis on careers work, and the part played by the heads of schools.

School 7 is one of the smaller schools, but its roll has now grown to over 1000. It serves a very scattered and varied population. Within the small town where it is situated there are some woollen mills and some tourist business, but its proximity to Edinburgh means that a number of people, mainly professional and business men, commute daily to the city. Two small local weaving communities are also served by the school, as is a wide area of countryside with some other villages. No less than 15 primary schools 'feed' pupils to this school, all but three of them outside the town itself. Thus the children at the school come from very varied backgrounds; there are the families of professional men working in Edinburgh and of shepherds living up remote glens.

The school itself occupies a Victorian building which provides the main accommodation, but it has been added to in a way that still preserves its compactness.

The guidance system in School 7 has to be viewed along with the general administrative arrangements. The school is divided horizontally into lower, middle, and upper schools. Each 'school' has been assigned a 'team' of two teachers, one an assistant or deputy head and one a principal teacher of guidance. There was no assistant head teacher with overall responsibility for guidance at the time referred to here. Thus at that time the formal guidance staff consisted of only three — fewer than in any other school. These teams do not move up with their pupils. Each team undertakes the guidance and administrative responsibilities related to the two year-groups in its charge. Thus there is not a clear division between the two types of duties. In addition there are two careers teachers, one of whom specialises in the field of entrance to tertiary education, but there is not the same emphasis on careers guidance as there is at School 6.

The guidance teachers do not attempt a programme of individual interviews. But the relatively small size of the school, together with the relatively large amount of non-teaching time available to them has meant that guidance teachers and assistant heads know the pupils reasonably well, even though they do not move up with them. The teams responsible for the lower and middle schools have special rooms where they are frequently available, and there is considerable coming and going of pupils to and from these rooms. The pupils' records are kept by the assistant heads in these rooms. Guidance staff are responsible for preparing the programme of social education but the implementation of the programme involves a variety of other people.

There is, therefore, less special emphasis on a separate guidance system than there is in most of the other schools. Guidance has been

established in such a way that it fits in with the administrative organisation of the school along horizontal lines. In this respect it is similar to School 6. Guidance goes hand-in-hand with the work of the heads of schools. This, together with the existence of special careers teachers, means that the activities of guidance teachers are concentrated largely on dealing with personal problems and administrative work, and on the social education programme.

School 8 is the smallest of all the eight, with a roll of about 600 in 1977-78. Yet, like the other Borders schools, it serves a wide area, drawing children from some remote country districts. The town itself is a small one but a traditional burgh with a long history. Although it is not very far away from other towns it preserves its sense of independence and provides work for most of its inhabitants. Over eighty percent of employed male residents and even more of the employed female residents work in the town itself. The woollen mills which have long been the main industry have recently been supplemented by some new forms of employment including a modern electronics factory. Most of the residents are manual workers, living mainly in Council houses, but there is a reasonable proportion of white-collar workers, small tradesmen and others. The town and its homes give to the visitor an impression of prosperity and well-being.

The school, though small, has always been a six-year school. It occupies new, compact buildings the last of which was opened in 1973. The distinctive characteristics of this school stem mainly from its size. At the time of the research reported here the senior staff of the school included only one assistant head along with the head teacher and deputy head. Because numbers are small it is possible for pupils and staff to be known personally and individually in a way that is difficult elsewhere.

The guidance system in School 8 also takes its characteristics in the first place from the size of the school. The arrangements have undergone some change since the time when the research reported here was conducted. At that time there was no assistant head teacher with special responsibility for guidance. The official guidance team consisted of one principal and three assistant principal teachers. They were joined for guidance purposes by the school's assistant head and one other specially interested teacher. All the pupils in the first four years were allocated to one of these six on an individual basis. Thus there was in practice a vertical system, with one guidance teacher responsible for each vertical group, but with a horizontal grouping of the fifth and sixth year under the principal teacher of guidance. (The word 'house' was kept for a different grouping used mainly in connection with sport.) The principal guidance teacher also acted as the careers teacher for the whole school.

One of the problems facing guidance teachers is that there is only one room available for interviewing or other guidance work. But because of the size and character of the school guidance teachers have not experienced excessive difficulties in other ways in connection with their guidance work. They have therefore been able to conduct regular individual interviews with the pupils in their care. In addition, guidance teachers have the task of teaching social education not to pupils in their own group but to classes generally. They are also responsible for the keeping of records which are housed at the general office, since there are no special guidance rooms. Guidance staff are not supposed to be responsible for disciplinary matters and in fact the pupils interviewed did not connect them with discipline.

The main focus of guidance in School 8 has therefore been on the regular personal contact with all pupils. Ironically, perhaps, this work of getting to know all pupils by regular interview has been most possible in the school where it is perhaps needed least, since because of the size of the school pupils tend to be known personally in any case, in the normal course of school life.

It will be clear from this brief description of the schools that there are considerable differences in the way the guidance systems operate. Schools 2, 6 and 7 have horizontal systems of one kind or another, and the rest have vertical. The four Borders schools all have specialist careers teachers with varying degrees of emphasis attached to their role, while in the Lanarkshire schools careers work is subsumed under guidance generally. But in addition to these structural differences it is clear that guidance and the role of guidance teachers are seen in different ways in different schools. In some, particularly Schools 3 and 4, guidance has assumed considerable prominence in the life of the school. In others, particularly Schools 2, 6 and 7 the work of guidance is more integrated with other aspects of school organisation. To say this is not to imply criticism of any approach or school. But it is important to have an understanding of the differing approaches to guidance if we are to understand the process of subject choice and course decision, to which we turn in the next chapter.

The pupils and their background

As was stated earlier the pupils who have been followed in this study were selected at random from the whole of their year group in each school. Their backgrounds therefore broadly represent the communities served by the schools. The distribution of their fathers' occupations is shown in Table 2.1. Particular points to note are the significant difference between the two Lanarkshire towns in the numbers of fathers in professional or managerial occupations (comparing Schools 1 and 2 with Schools 3 and 4), and the numbers in farming in the Borders. Table 2.2 shows the education levels

TABLE 2.1

FATHERS' OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

1st Sample

Percentages

School	*Professional*	*Managerial*	*Other non manual*	*Foremen & Self-employed*	*Skilled manual*	*Semi-skilled*	*Unskilled*	*Farmers & Farm workers*	*Others*	*Total*	
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	%	*N*
1	19	23	11	9	20	12	3	1	3	101	75
2	7	12	8	21	36	8	7	0	1	100	75
3	0	3	3	19	45	21	7	0	3	101	73
4	0	11	14	11	46	14	3	0	3	102	74
5	10	14	10	10	36	9	3	4	4	100	70
6	4	10	7	19	25	12	6	12	6	101	73
7	15	21	6	11	25	12	1	10	0	101	73
8	10	11	6	21	25	11	3	11	4	102	73
Total	8	13	8	15	32	12	4	5	3	100	586

TABLE 2.1 — *continued*

FATHERS' OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

2nd Sample

Percentages

School	*Professional*	*Managerial*	*Other non manual*	*Foremen & Self-employed*	*Skilled manual*	*Semi-skilled*	*Unskilled*	*Farmers & Farm-workers*	*Others*	*Total*	
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	%	*N*
1	16	19	12	18	24	5	4	1	0	99	74
2	13	8	13	10	35	10	11	0	0	100	71
3	1	3	4	14	50	18	10	0	0	100	72
4	0	7	18	12	46	12	5	0	0	100	74
5	7	22	15	13	25	12	3	3	0	100	60
6	3	10	11	8	34	11	7	15	0	99	61
7	10	11	8	6	37	10	6	11	0	99	62
8	13	19	10	9	21	10	0	16	1	99	68
Total	8	12	11	11	34	11	6	6	<1	99	542

N.B.: This classification is based upon the Socio-economic groups as set out in the Classification of Occupations of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS 1970). Our classification has been formed from these groups as follows: 1 = SEG 3 and 4, 2 = SEG 1 and 2, 3 = SEG 5 and 6, 4 = SEG 8 and 12, 5 = SEG 9, 6 = SEG 7 and 10, 7 = SEG 11, 8 = SEG 13, 14 and 15, 9 = SEG 16, 17. The relevant information was not available in respect of a few fathers, particularly in the second sample.

TABLE 2.2

PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

		Fathers										Mothers									
		Percentages								*Total*		Percentages								*Total*	
		1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	%	*N*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	%	*N*
School		*1st Sample*																			
Left School at 14 or 15		68	95	94	94	84	92	79	88	87	476	83	90	94	93	93	94	72	86	88	486
Left at 16 or 17, no Highers		13	3	4	4	8	3	2	3	5	27	10	6	4	4	5	5	9	6	6	33
Highers but not university		11	3	1	1	1	3	5	4	4	21	4	3	1	3	0	2	10	3	3	18
University		8	0	0	0	6	1	15	4	4	24	3	1	0	0	2	0	9	5	2	13
Total	%	100	101	99	99	99	99	101	99	100		100	100	99	100	100	101	100	100	99	
	N	71	73	71	72	62	66	66	67	548		72	72	72	73	61	66	68	66	550	
		2nd Sample																			
Left School at 14 or 15		82	89	94	100	85	93	83	78	88	468	84	88	97	92	79	92	68	73	84	462
Left at 16 or 17, no Highers		4	7	4	0	10	5	6	12	6	32	12	7	1	4	10	8	19	11	9	49
Highers but not university		13	0	1	0	2	0	6	3	3	17	4	6	1	4	8	0	13	11	6	32
University		1	4	0	0	3	2	5	6	3	14	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	4	1	5
Total	%	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	99	100		100	101	99	100	100	100	100	99	100	
	N	71	71	70	74	59	58	63	65	531		73	72	72	74	61	64	62	70	548	

attained by the fathers and mothers of the pupils. What is striking here is the very small number who had any formal education beyond the age of fourteen or fifteen — 11% of all fathers and 13% of all mothers. The numbers of those who achieved Higher Leaving Certificates (as they were then called) is smaller still. Very few indeed went on to higher education. This lack of full-time education after the age of fifteen is particularly marked amongst the parents of Schools 3 and 4. Thus in respect of both fathers' occupational level and parents' educational level there are some important differences between the schools, and our samples cannot be taken as representative of Scotland as a whole.

Furthermore, in those homes where the father was a manual worker, the number of parents who had continued at school beyond the age of fifteen was negligible (13 fathers or 2 percent, 30 mothers or 5 percent, both samples together); and the number who had received any kind of post-school education or training beyond craft level was also very small (12 fathers or 2 percent, 38 mothers or 7 percent). So for the purposes of general analysis at this stage we do not propose to use parents' educational level as a separate variable, since it coincides so largely with occupational level of the father. Father's occupational level is, therefore, used in our analyses as a convenient way of referring both to the socio-economic and the educational level of the home.

Another piece of information about the pupils has played an important part in our study. This has to do with their performance in class work in the school. No use has been made of objective measures of ability or intelligence. Rather we have used the grades obtained by each child in the sample in all subjects during the first two years of secondary schooling. In most of the schools pupils were awarded a grade on a scale of A to E with grade C usually representing roughly 40 percent of the total year group. After averaging their grades for all subjects we divided the pupils into three Bands. Band 1 included those with an average of A or B, Band 2 those with an average of C, and Band 3 those with an average of D or E. In our analyses the second year Band turned out to yield the most interesting results, and this is what 'Band' refers to in the following pages. The numbers in each Band in the various schools are shown in Table 2.3. It will be seen that the overall distribution approximates to 30 40 30 percent respectively in the three Bands.

The reason why a Band constructed in this way has been used, rather than objective test scores, is because in this study we are interested in decision making and factors influencing decisions. Since the grades and the construction of the Bands appear in the pupils' school reports, we have assumed that the Bands broadly represent what the school has conveyed to pupils and parents about the pupils'

ability. In our analysis we will be interested to see how this understanding or perception of their ability represented by the Band is related to the decisions and choices made as the young people move up through the school.

TABLE 2.3

NUMBERS OF PUPILS IN EACH BAND

	Boys			*Girls*			*Boys & Girls*			
Band	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*Total*
1st Sample										
School										
1	10	22	5	15	12	9	25	34	14	73
2	12	15	11	13	14	6	25	29	17	71
3	7	15	10	9	15	5	16	30	15	61
4	6	17	14	16	12	9	22	29	23	74
5	12	14	8	9	15	12	21	29	20	70
6	13	15	9	13	13	10	26	28	19	73
7	13	12	12	15	14	8	28	26	20	74
8	11	12	12	18	9	10	29	21	22	72
Total	84	122	81	108	104	69	192	226	150	568
2nd Sample										
School										
1	12	15	10	6	23	8	18	38	18	74
2	14	8	15	9	13	14	23	21	29	73
3	11	11	15	10	14	13	21	25	28	74
4	12	14	11	10	16	11	22	30	22	74
5	13	8	16	15	10	12	28	18	28	74
6	10	15	12	13	13	11	23	28	23	74
7	5	17	15	12	16	9	17	33	24	74
8	9	17	11	12	16	9	21	33	20	74
Total	86	105	105	87	121	87	173	226	192	591

N.B.: Second year grades were unobtainable in a few cases, notably in School 3 in the first sample.

Finally, Table 2.4 shows how the pupils' Bands were related to their fathers' occupational level. There is clearly some association between the two: those whose fathers were professional or other white collar workers tended to be in Bands 1 or 2, while a higher

TABLE 2.4

NUMBERS IN BANDS BY FATHERS' OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

	1st Sample				*2nd Sample*			
	Band				*Band*			
Fathers' Occupation	*1*	*2*	*3*	*Total*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*Total*
1. Professional	27	18	1	46	26	16	1	43
2. Managerial	41	25	9	75	31	28	7	66
3. Other non-manual	23	18	4	45	20	31	11	62
4. Foremen & Self-employed	24	46	17	87	16	24	22	62
5. Skilled manual	48	71	62	181	47	65	73	185
6. Semi-skilled	14	24	27	65	12	21	27	60
7. Unskilled	0	11	10	21	6	11	15	32
8. Farmers & Farm workers	12	8	7	27	6	17	7	30
9. Others	2	1	11	14	—	1	—	1
Totals	191	222	148	561	164	214	163	541

proportion of the children of less skilled workers were in Band 3. Nevertheless there was not a complete correspondence between them: considerable numbers of pupils with manual working fathers were in Band 1. Thus it will be appropriate in many parts of our study to consider these two variables independently.

CHAPTER 3

DECIDING THE SUBJECTS

In this chapter we turn our attention to the 'subject choice' process in the schools with which we were concerned.

In order to investigate and understand this process and its implications more fully we will follow three general lines of enquiry. Firstly, we will look in more detail at the procedures adopted by the schools, including the guidance offered to pupils and the opportunities offered to parents to be involved. Secondly, we will briefly consider the curriculum offered in the schools and the outcomes of the process of subject choice in the form of subjects actually studied in third year. Thirdly, we will attempt to understand more fully how the decisions about subjects were reached and the part played by various people — pupils, parents, teachers and friends — in the process. This is followed by a discussion of the extent of freedom of choice and of other emerging issues.

One further preliminary point should be made. It must be borne in mind that this study of subject choice was made in relation to pupils who were in their third year in 1976-77 and 1977-78. Policies and practices in schools are not static, however, and we are aware that in some schools changes have taken place even since this study was done. Nevertheless, we have no reason to think that our general conclusions would be different if the study had been conducted in different years.

(a) *Procedures for subject choice*

All of the schools in the study followed broadly the same procedure in connection with subject choice. By the beginning of the summer term a paper was prepared showing the options available to pupils entering the third year. Early in the term copies of this "choice sheet" were given to all second year pupils (sometimes with the exception of remedial or other less-able pupils), usually along with an explanatory letter to be shown to parents. Pupils and their parents were asked to choose from among the subjects listed on the sheets, and to return the sheet, with the choices marked. In some cases recommended subjects or courses were indicated by the school for each pupil. All schools

provided an opportunity for parents to come to the school to get information and advice, usually at a parents' meeting. There were also opportunities of various kinds for pupils to get help or guidance from teachers. When the sheets were returned necessary or appropriate adjustments could be made by the school, and they were then used as a basis for making up classes and timetables for the third year. This, in outline, was the procedure followed in all the schools, but there were of course differences between them. In the following brief account of the procedure adopted by each school we concentrate on the following points: whether steps were taken to prepare pupils for subject choice; whether pupils were informed that entry to particular subjects, or to the study of subjects at certificate level, was restricted or conditional; what arrangements were made for individual pupils to receive advice or guidance; what arrangements were made to involve parents in subject choice.

School 1 attempted to prepare pupils for the choice of subjects by including material on subjects and careers within the programme of social education in second year. While, as we noted earlier, this programme was not followed by all the teachers responsible for social education periods, each class should at least have had a visit from the careers officer, and an introduction to the careers library. Thus an attempt was made to make pupils aware of the implications of subject choice for careers. Overall responsibility for the course decision process was in the hands of the head of middle school, who visited each second year class, distributed the option sheets and gave an explanatory talk. There was no explanatory letter sent with the sheet but pupils were expected to explain the sheet to their parents. No formal arrangements were made for pupils to obtain advice or guidance about their choices. No pupil was formally barred from choosing any subject on the sheet and the question of whether the subject would be studied at certificate, or non-certificate level was not formally raised except insofar as some non-certificate subjects were listed on the sheet. It was open to them if they wished, however, to go to see the head of middle school, the head of lower school, their guidance teachers or teachers of particular subjects to ask for help or advice. No one source of advice or guidance was indicated to the pupils. The parents' meeting was regarded as the final deciding point before the sheets were handed in. At the meeting the headteacher explained the options, and parents had the chance to talk to teachers. The careers officer was also in attendance for consultation. Soon after the meeting when the completed option sheets were returned to the school, the head of middle school went over them to check for inconsistencies or inappropriate choices, and, where necessary, he spoke to individual pupils before making up timetables.

School 2 also included material on subject choice and careers in the

second year social education programme, and here too the careers officer was involved in the programme. The option sheets were explained to the pupils in class by the assistant head teachers, or guidance teachers. Some principal teachers also visited classes to give brief descriptions of their subjects. It was made clear to the pupils that most subjects could be studied at either the certificate or non-certificate level. Pupils were instructed to go to principal teachers of the subjects they were considering choosing, and find out from them, by means of an additional form, at what level they would be allowed to do the subject. In this way pupils and their parents could take into account in choosing their subjects whether or not choosing any particular subject would lead to an O Grade certificate. Principal teachers were asked to base these decisions about this not only on examination marks but on the teacher's overall assessment. It was thus the deliberate intention of the headteacher not to leave the subject choice process completely in the hands of guidance staff, but to involve subject teachers in the process as well. There was moreover no formal system of individual guidance in connection with subject choice. The pupils also received a letter to their parents, together with a page of explanatory notes, both fairly brief and clear. The parents' meeting was seen mainly as an occasion for further explanation by the head and senior staff, and for answering questions. No opportunity was provided for parents to meet teachers individually on this occasion. The head teacher believed that most of the problems were cleared up at this meeting, and parents could contact the school if any problem still remained. The completed sheets were then returned and used by the head of middle school for making up the third year timetable.

In School 3 there was some preparatory work on subject choice done in social education periods during second year, but the extent of this varied from one house to another. An important feature of the choice procedure was that each pupil had an individual interview with a guidance teacher to discuss the choice of subjects. In this way guidance teachers played a central part in the subject choice process. Other teachers could be consulted by individual pupils, but, following their interviews with guidance staff, few pupils found this necessary. During their individual interviews the subjects on the sheet were discussed in the light of the pupil's performance and his possible careers intentions, and the teacher gave advice about which subjects would be most appropriate. The subjects agreed on were entered on the sheet as "subjects recommended", but no indication was given as to whether they would be studied at certificate or non-certificate level. The pupil then took the sheet to his parents, who were asked to indicate their acceptance of these recommendations or to insert preferred alternatives. The parents also received an explanatory

letter, and an invitation to a parents' meeting. Those who came to the meeting had an opportunity to talk to subject teachers as well as guidance staff, to help them settle any problems. Most parents were, however, ready to accept the recommendations on the option sheet. As elsewhere, the forms were returned to the head of middle school who was responsible for the third year timetable.

Preparation for choosing subjects was also included in the social education programme for second year in School 4. This included a 'dummy run', shortly before the actual choice process began. The option sheets were given out by the head of middle school who had overall responsibility for the process. Along with the sheets the pupils received some explanatory papers in which it was made clear, amongst other things, that admission to certificate level work in any subject depended on their performance in second year. By the time of our second sample, marks in all subjects in second year had been standardised and pupils were told that a mark of 40 percent would normally be required if a subject was to be studied at certificate level in third year. But it was also made clear that this was not a rigid or inflexible rule. Further advice about choices was given in the form of brief talks during assemblies by principal teachers about their own subjects, and by the careers officer. Guidance teachers attempted some individual interviews with pupils, but in many cases this was not possible. Pupils could, however, go to see their guidance teachers or the head of middle school if they wished. They could also consult subject teachers but were not particularly encouraged to do so. Parents were invited, by means of a short, simple letter, to come to school one evening for a brief personal interview. These interviews were conducted by teachers (not only guidance teachers) each of whom had been carefully briefed and prepared beforehand. This briefing included information about the particular pupils whose parents they were to see, and instructions about how to offer advice. During these interviews the option forms were filled in by the parents and interviewing teacher together. Those children whose parents did not come for interview were seen personally by the guidance staff so that the forms could be completed. The guidance teachers then reviewed the completed forms and made any necessary adjustments, before passing them to the head of middle school.

In School 5 pupils were given the opportunity to study subjects under the CSE Mode 3 system as well as subjects which led to SCE O Grade awards. The year when our first sample of pupils were making their choices was the first occasion when CSE courses were offered. Preparation for choice, therefore, was particularly necessary and a careful course of preparation was introduced, though not until the following year. The subject choice procedure involved a number of distinct steps. Soon after the course of preparation, the guidance

teachers gave out the option forms to the classes, together with a letter to parents. This drew attention to the steps in the procedure, and gave some explanation of the CSE courses. The next step was a brief interview of each pupil by the guidance teachers. This took place during a gathering in the hall when pupils were called to the front individually to receive their school reports. In addition to the reports guidance teachers had before them recommendations from principal subject teachers about which pupils should study their subject at SCE O Grade level. The guidance teachers discussed the options with the pupils and filled in the choice sheet with them, encouraging those who had not done well in any area of study so far to take CSE rather the SCE courses. After this pupils were free to discuss the options with individual subject teachers, but this was not particularly encouraged by the head teacher. Soon after the interviews by the guidance teachers the parents' meeting was held. This gave parents a chance to meet subject and guidance teachers and to discuss alternatives to what had been entered on the forms. The careers officer was also present for consultation at this meeting. The final stage of the procedure was a brief interview of each pupil by the head teacher. He went over the choices which now appeared on the sheet, in the light of the needs of the pupil and the requirements of the timetable, and made adjustments where necessary.

In School 6 the choice procedure has to be understood in the light of the fact that a choice of subjects was offered only to some pupils following 'certificate' courses. The less academic pupils were assigned to a non-certificate common course, without any choice of subjects. For the others all the subjects offered were in preparation for SCE O Grades. At the time of our first sample, some pupils were put on a 'limited certificate' course, which meant that certain subjects were not open to them, and their choice was therefore limited. The following year, however, there was no limited certificate course, and pupils were assigned either to a certificate or a non-certificate course. The option sheet was given out early, during the spring term. With it went some detailed notes about the subjects and about requirements for entry into courses of further and higher education. There was no formal course of preparation, but before the choices were made the careers teacher went round all the classes speaking about subjects and careers. Some principal teachers also spoke to classes, particularly about subjects which were new to second year pupils. There was no system of individual interviews by guidance teachers for advice about choices, but pupils could consult their guidance teacher or talk to individual subject teachers. Subject teachers had, however, no formal responsibility within the procedure. Parents had an opportunity to come to school in class groups on a series of evenings in February or March to discuss their children's progress. But in addition to this

there were two parents' meetings more specifically related to subject choice. At these parents could meet subject teachers as well as guidance staff. Subsequently the forms were completed by pupils or parents and returned to the head of middle school, but final decisions and adjustments were made by the head teacher in the light of timetabling needs and the numbers in classes.

The academically less able pupils were also assigned to a particular course in School 7. There was a choice of subjects available within this course, and a degree of flexibility by which some non-certificate pupils could take one or two SCE subjects. But generally speaking pupils had to choose within a group either of certificate or of non-certificate subjects. The option sheets were handed out and explained in the classes by the guidance teachers, but there was no preparatory work within the social education programme. On the sheet was the school's recommendation as to which course the pupil should follow. These recommendations were based on the pupils' average marks in a number of subjects during the second year. A fairly clear letter of explanation for parents was given out with the sheets. Pupils were encouraged to go to guidance teachers if they wanted help or advice. They were not encouraged to go to subject teachers, though this did happen to some extent. No attempt was made to interview pupils individually. In this school the completed option forms with the pupils' or parents' choices were returned to the school before the parents' meeting, which was held fairly late. The result was that it was attended largely by those who felt there were problems or questions still to be settled. The responsibility for final decisions about subjects to be studied lay with the guidance and administrative staff of the lower and middle schools, who in this school were more than usually constrained by the need to make up classes with appropriate numbers of pupils.

School 8 offered a group of non-certificate subjects, but there was no allocation of pupils to a certificate or a non-certificate course. It was possible to take a mixture of subjects at different levels. Entry into a certificate level subject was, however, restricted to those who had achieved a reasonable level of performance in second year — usually a C or better on ar A to E scale. Pupils were informed of this position with the result that most of them knew which certificate subjects they would be able to choose. There was no formal scheme of preparation for subject choice, but the options were explained to the pupils when the sheets were distributed. This was done by the guidance teachers during the social education periods for which they were responsible. A letter for parents was given out along with the sheet. Thereafter each pupil was given an individual interview by a guidance teacher, to discuss the most appropriate choice of subjects. Pupils could also consult subject teachers if they wished. The school

did not, however, make any formal recommendations as to overall course or particular subjects. The option sheets did not require to be completed until after the parents' meeting had been held. At the meeting guidance and subject teachers and the careers officer were available for consultation. Thereafter the completed forms were returned to the guidance staff. They had the responsibility, in consultation with the principal subject teachers, for making final decisions. These decisions had to be made with special regard to the numbers required to make up classes, a particularly difficult matter in a school of this size.

(b) *Subjects available and subjects chosen*

We move now to a consideration of the options available to pupils in the various schools, and of the outcomes of the process of course decision, in the form of subjects actually studied in the third year. In particular we wish to find out whether there are any observable patterns in the kinds of subjects studied by different types of pupils. Table 3.1 shows the relevant parts of the subject option sheets given to the second sample pupils in the eight schools. It requires no more than a quick glance at these option sheets to realise that they were all very similar in many ways. All had vertical columns containing lists of subjects. One subject had to be chosen from each column. English was compulsory in every school, and in addition to a column containing mathematics and arithmetic (sometimes in combination with other things) there were usually four other columns. At the heads of these columns there appeared some combination of the following subjects: history and geography (always in the same column), physics, chemistry, French, and sometimes Latin or German. Below these came a variety of other subjects which included, in every case, modern studies, biology, art, music, secretarial studies, home economics, technical subjects of different kinds, usually accounting and anatomy, physiology and health, and in some cases a number of others.

Thus from even such a quick glance at the option sheets it is obvious that the curriculum offered in all the schools was very similar. This curriculum was clearly governed by the O Grade syllabus, which includes all the subjects named above. But it will also be clear from the option sheets that the subjects had been arranged, intentionally or otherwise, in a rough hierarchy, with the more highly valued traditional academic subjects being placed at the tops of the columns. The subjects as a whole can in fact be roughly divided into four groups. First there are the traditional academic subjects which have just been mentioned. Then there is a somewhat varied group of other subjects which appear within the O Grade syllabus. Thirdly, there is a small group of largely practical subjects which are within

TABLE 3.1

SUBJECT OPTIONS — SESSION 1977-78*

School 1

Maths & Arith.	History	French	Physics	Latin
Statistics & Arith.	Geography	Chemistry	Chemistry	German
Commerce & Arith.	Modern Studies	Physics	Biology	French
Homecraft (NC) & Arith.		Secretarial Studies	Music	Art
		A.P.H.	Art	Food & Nutrition
		Eng. Science	German (beginners)	Mod. St./ History/ Geography
		Tech. Drawing	Latin (beginners)	Eng. Science
		W'work *or* M'work	Greek (beginners)	Tech. Drawing
		Gen. Science and Conversl. French (NC)	Fashion & Fabric	W'work *or* M'work
			Accounting	Catering and Conversl. French (NC)
		Technical and Gen. Science (NC)	Gen. Science (NC)	Homecraft (NC)
			Homecraft (NC)	Latin/ German/ French

School 2

Maths & Arith.	History	French	Physics	Chemistry
Statistics & Arith.	Geography	Biology	Biology	Latin
	Modern Studies	Fabric & Fashion	German	Accounting

Cert. Arith. & Practical Maths Practical Maths	Food & Nutrition Woodwork Metalwork Eng. Drawing	Secretarial Studies Art Music Eng. Science	Food & Nutrition Fabric & Fashion Geography History Metalwork Woodwork Eng. Drawing

School 3

History Geography Modern Studies Special Art Special Music Latin	French (or European Studies) Home Economics Secretarial Studies Tech. (Craft) Tech. (Applied Mech./Eng. Drawing)	Physics Biology General Science Home Economics Special Art History Geography Modern Studies Classical Studies Latin Secretarial Studies Economics Geology	Chemistry Biology General Science Spanish Russian Greek European Studies Accounting Technical (Craft) Technical (Applied) Mech./Eng. Drawing

* In every school English, P.E., Music, Social and/or Religious education were compulsory. Some form of Mathematics and/or Arithmetic, where not included in the columns, was also compulsory.

Table 3.1 — *continued*

School 4*

Maths/Arith.	Geography	French	Biology	French
Statistics/ Arith.	History	Secretarial Studies	Chemistry	Technical Drawing
Arith. & Geography	Modern Studies	Chemistry	Physics	Secretarial Studies
Arith. & Mod. Studies	Woodwork	Physics	Eng. Science	History
Arith. & Social Studies	Metalwork	Art	Food & Nutrition	A.P.H.
	German	Tech. Drawing	Accounting	Fabric & Fashion
				Woodwork
	Art	Home Economics (craft)	Science	Science
	Home Economics (Garment making)	Technical	Technical	Catering
		Art	Secretarial Studies	Typing

**N.B.*: In School 4 the arrangement of options in 1977-78 was considerably different from the previous year, when the tops of the columns were: German French Chemistry Physics

In Schools 4, 5 and 8 those subjects above the broken horizontal line were 'certificate' (i.e., SCE) subjects, and those below the line were 'non-certificate' or (in School 5) CSE subjects.

School 5

Mathematics	French	Latin	Chemistry (Physics)	Physics (Chemistry)
Secretarial Studies	Modern Studies	History	Economics	History
Food & Nutrition	Tech. Educ.	Geography	Secretarial	Geography
	Food & Nutrition	Biology/A.P.H.		

Tech. Educ.		Secretarial Studies	Studies Food & Nutrition German Greek Music Art Fashion & Fabric	Accounts
Craft Home Econ. (cookery) Office Practice	Environmental Studies	Child Care Community Studies	European Studies Motor Technology Art	Leisure/Craft Consumer Educ. Music

School 6

History Geography	Physics Biology Art	Chemistry A.P.H. Art	French Modern Studies Technical Craft Home Economics (Fabric & Fashion)	Latin Music Food & Nutrition Eng. Drawing Applied Mechanics Art Accounting
	Secretarial Studies German (Beginners)			

Table 3.1 — *continued*

School 7

MATHS	HISTORY	FRENCH	CHEM. & PHYSICS	PHYSICS
MODERN STUDIES	GEOGRAPHY	FASHION & FABRIC	CHEM. & BIOLOGY	BIOLOGY
	MODERN STUDIES	FOOD & NUTRITION	CHEMISTRY	CHEMISTRY
Course A		ENG. DRAWING & MECHANICS	PHYSICS	GEOGRAPHY
			ART	PR. OF ACCOUNTS
Course B		ENG. DRAWING & W'WORK	SEC. STUDIES	GERMAN
ARITHMETIC	General Science		FOOD & NUTRITION	LATIN
Arithmetic	Secretarial	ENG. DRAWING & M'WORK	GERMAN (Begin.)	MUSIC
	Modern Studies			
	Art	Home Economics (cookery, mothercraft)	Boys: Art, Games	Boys: Building Tech. & cookery
			Girls: Art, Games	Girls: Technical & Food Science
		Tech. Educ.		

Note: Certificate subjects are in CAPITAL and non-certificate subjects in small letters. Course B also included a choice of HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY or Social Studies.

Table 3.1 — *continued*

School 8

French	Mathematics	History	Chemistry	Chemistry
Food & Nutrition	Statistics	Geography	Physics	Physics
Tech. Subjects	Economics	Chemistry	Biology	History
Agriculture		Biology	Geography	Greek
Accounts		A.P.H.	Latin	German
Secretarial Studies		Tech. Subjects	Music	Art
		Fabric & Fashion		Modern Studies
Tech. Subjects	Commercial Arith.	Motor Mechanics	Science	Art
Home Economics	Horticulture (boys)	Health & First Aid (g)	Horticulture (girls)	History
		Household Management (b)	Modern Studies	Woodwork (girls)

TABLE 3.2

NUMBERS OF PUPILS STUDYING VARIOUS SUBJECTS, BY SCHOOL

School No.	*1*		*2*		*3*		*4*		*5*		*6*		*7*		*8*		*Totals*		
Sample No.	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*All*
History	23	27	31	32	16	24	23	37	22	22	52	50	20	25	13	24	206	235	441
Geography	31	43	50	40	24	23	23	37	17	18	38	52	47	29	26	22	300	220	520
Modern Studies	15	7	8	13	29	24	11	17	10	2	4	2	32	16	9	17	99	117	216
Latin	4	3	2	2	5	4			4		2	2		7	3	4	17	25	42
Classical Studies					6	4											10		10
French	39	48	31	33	15	17	23	19	16	28	27	25	31	21	21	28	160	262	422
German	11	8	2	2	1		3	2		2	4		11	2	4	2	17	37	54
Spanish					2	6											1	7	8
Art	15	21	16	19	6	7	3	9	18	11	27	40	8	12	17	6	113	122	235
Music			3	1			1	1	1				1	4	5	24	18	23	41
Economics										1		16				5	19	3	22
Accounting	8	12	7	9	5	8		8	2	6	12	15		3	10	5	28	82	110
Commerce	11	8	2				2		2	8	19					9	15	46	61
Secretarial Studies	14	19	10	17	20	24	20	32	15	9	16	25	14	10		10	6	249	255
Home Economics (Genl.)	9	7	4	4	22		1	12		13	10		7	9	12	10	30	90	120
HE Food & Nutrition	12	5	11	11		31	22	12	31	10	16	21	19	26	10	9	74	172	246
HE Fashion & Fabric	6		4	7	1		5	5	2			18	2	4	2	1	1	56	57

A.P.H.	5	5	1		1		4	2	5		8	3			12	16	7	55	62
Building Drawing									6				1				7		7
Woodwork		3	12	7	1			9	15					5		10	51	11	62
Metalwork		8	5	4	3			3	7					4		1	24	1	35
Technical (Gen.)	18		4	5	21	22	21	8		26	22	28	11	10	25	11	215	17	232
Eng. Dr./Sc.	14	15	18	12	8	13	13	17	4		16	16	11	15	4	7	179	4	183
Biology	19	16	20	18	16	23	17	12	13	24	9	37	25	20	31	21	120	201	321
Chemistry	20	24	21	35	14	24	37	37	31	32	26	20	31	30	33	37	252	200	452
Physics	33	33	29	27	12	13	29	24	20	21	22	24	16	15	15	16	271	78	349
Agricultural Sc.															10	7	17		17
Horticulture															10	15	13	12	25
Gen. Science	3		9	8	24	20	11	11			19	29	17	15	9	8	118	65	183
Child Care									11	11								22	22
Community St.									7	9							15	1	16
Consumer Education									13	16							13	16	29
Environment St.									13	14							9	18	27
European St.					13	7			4	9							17	16	33
Social Studies							16	2				29		16			35	28	63
Motor Tech.									6	15					11	2	31	3	34
Arts/Crafts							14			8			22	21			38	27	65
Geology						2											2		2
Home Management																5	5		5
Food Science														9				9	9

the O Grade syllabus, but which are generally considered appropriate for the less academic pupils. And lastly, there is on some sheets a group of 'non-certificate' subjects, or special subjects for the less academic pupils, which are outwith the O Grade syllabus. It is presumably no accident that in most of the option sheets the subjects are listed in the columns roughly in the order in which we have described them. For convenience we will refer to these four groups of subjects as four Orders. Thus Order 1 refers to the traditionally academic subjects, found at the tops of the columns; Order 2 to the main body of other O Grade subjects; Order 3 to the distinctly practical O Grade subjects; and Order 4 to the special non-certificate

TABLE 3.3

NUMBERS OF PUPILS DOING VARYING NUMBERS OF SUBJECTS OF DIFFERENT ORDERS, BY BAND

1st Sample

Band 1

Number of subjects taken

Order	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5+*
1	1	—	7	25	62	97
2	98	76	17	1	—	—
3	158	33	—	1	—	—
4	189	3	—	—	—	—

Band 2

Order	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5+*
1	10	31	60	55	51	19
2	57	105	46	15	3	—
3	88	120	18	—	—	—
4	183	24	17	2	—	—

Band 3

Order	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5+*
1	45	42	21	36	5	1
2	51	66	27	5	1	—
3	15	102	32	1	—	—
4	29	49	48	21	3	—

2nd Sample

Band 1

Number of subjects taken

Order	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5+*
1	2	1	3	18	52	97
2	90	58	22	3	—	—
3	152	20	1	—	—	—
4	173	—	—	—	—	—

Band 2

Order	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5+*
1	9	22	38	78	51	28
2	42	94	72	17	1	—
3	116	96	14	—	—	—
4	193	21	10	2	—	—

Band 3

Order	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5+*
1	66	50	34	17	25	—
2	48	71	60	13	—	—
3	26	103	60	3	—	—
4	57	53	52	17	10	3

subjects. This division into Orders based on the names of the subjects as they appear in the option sheets is clearly a rather crude one. Nevertheless, it can reveal something about the curriculum followed by different types of pupils.

The outcomes of the subject choice procedure, in terms of the subjects actually studied by the pupils in their third year, are shown in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. The first lists all the subjects and shows the numbers studying them in each school. The second shows the numbers of subjects in the four different Orders which were being studied by pupils in the three different Bands. The question now arises: is it possible to observe any meaningful regularities or patterns in these tables which would help towards an understanding of the course decision process? Three points call for comment.

The first is that there is a clear relationship between the Bands of the pupils and the Orders of the subjects they were studying. In particular it is obvious from Table 3.3 that the overwhelming majority of Band 1 pupils were doing a course consisting of four or more Order 1 subjects and very few were doing more than one subject from another Order. Similarly the majority of Band 2 pupils were doing two, three or four Order 1 subjects but most were also doing at least one subject from Order 2 and one from Order 3. These patterns prevailed in all the schools. The Band 3 pupils, however, were doing subjects more evenly spread over the four Orders. The large majority were doing one Order 3 subject and at least one Order 4 subject.

Secondly, the lack of a clear pattern in the subjects studied by the Band 3 pupils is due to the fact that the curriculum offered to the less academic pupils varied from one school to another. There was a greater emphasis on Order 4 subjects in some schools than in others. This is apparent both from the numbers of such subjects available and the numbers of pupils studying them. On the one hand there was School 5 with a number of CSE subjects being taken by an increasing number of pupils. At the other extreme, Schools 1 and 2 offered very few subjects which were not in the O Grade syllabus, and even these were studied by only a few pupils. Thus there were differences of emphasis in the approach to the curriculum for the less academic pupil in the different schools. Some attempted to provide a variety of opportunities for such pupils to study special subjects, sometimes of a more vocational and practical nature. Others placed less emphasis on special subjects but made it possible for Band 3 pupils to study a larger number of Order 1 and Order 2 subjects, often at a level lower than that required for the O Grade examination. Schools differed also on another point to do with the less academic pupils. In some schools there was little variation between individual pupils in Band 3 in the type of course they were pursuing, while in others there was much more flexibility. This can be briefly illustrated by reference to

TABLE 3.4

NUMBERS OF BAND 3 PUPILS STUDYING VARYING NUMBERS OF ORDER 1 SUBJECTS, BY SCHOOL

Both samples combined

School No.	*No. of Order 1 subjects* 0	1	2	3	4	5	*Total*
1	8	15	5	3	1	—	32
2	7	9	9	20	1	—	46
3	—	12	26	5	—	—	43
4	20	11	6	3	4	1	45
5	20	27	1	—	—	—	48
6	1	—	—	19	22	—	42
7	33	8	3	—	—	—	44
8	22	10	5	3	2	—	42

Table 3.4. This shows the number of Band 3 pupils taking different numbers of Order 1 subjects in the eight schools. Broadly speaking we may say that the more spread out the numbers are across the columns, the more flexibility there was in the type of course available for these pupils. Thus in Schools 1, 2 and 4, in particular, some Band 3 pupils were taking no Order 1 subjects while others were taking one, two, three or four. On the other hand, in Schools 5, 6 and 7 Band 3 pupils differed little from each other in the number of Order 1 subjects they were doing. The curriculum followed by the Band 3 pupils in the various schools differed therefore in these two ways — in the kinds of subjects available to them, and the flexibility with which they could take subjects of different Orders. These differences will have to be borne in mind when we come to consider how decisions about subjects were reached.

Thirdly, it is clear from the last column of Table 3.2 that some subjects were studied mostly by boys and others mostly by girls. The same pattern is to be observed in both samples, and it was found, with minor and partial exceptions, in every school (although the details for each school have not been included for reasons of space). Thus secretarial studies, fashion and fabric and anatomy, physiology and health were almost exclusively girls' subjects, and girls were in the majority amongst those studying French, German, biology, accounting, food and nutrition and commerce. Similarly, woodwork, metalwork, building drawing, engineering drawing and general technical were almost exclusively boys' subjects, and boys were in the majority in the study of geography, physics and general science.

TABLE 3.5

NUMBERS OF PUPILS STUDYING VARIOUS COMBINATIONS OF SCIENCE SUBJECTS BY SEX AND BAND

Both samples combined

	Biology only		*Chemistry only*		*Physics only*		*General science only*		*Biology and Chemistry*		*Biology and Physics*		*Physics and Chemistry*		*Physics, Chemistry & Biology*		*None of these*		*Totals*	
	B	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*
Band 1	2	22	4	17	21	5	—	—	13	48	1	1	111	51	9	7	8	42	169	193
Band 2	30	52	20	24	46	2	22	9	24	36	7	1	49	7	2	1	24	91	224	223
Band 3	10	16	7	5	15	1	96	56	4	3	1	—	9	1	—	—	42	74	184	156
Total	42	90	31	46	82	8	118	65	41	87	9	2	169	59	11	8	74	207	577	572

TABLE 3.6

NUMBERS OF PUPILS STUDYING VARIOUS COMBINATIONS OF LANGUAGE SUBJECTS BY SEX AND BAND

Both samples combined

	French only		*German only*		*Latin only*		*French & Latin*		*French & German*		*2 other languages*		*3 languages*		*4 languages*		*None of these*		*Totals*	
	B	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*	*B*	*G*
Band 1	94	119	2	1	1	1	9	18	11	23	—	6	2	4	—	1	50	20	169	193
Band 2	36	78	—	1	1	—	3	—	3	10	—	—	—	1	—	—	181	133	224	223
Band 3	1	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	183	149	184	156
Total	131	204	2	2	2	1	12	18	14	33	—	6	2	5	—	1	414	302	577	572

In some cases the pattern of subjects taken was related both to the sex and to the Band of the pupils in an interesting way. This is shown in Tables 3.5 and 3.6, with relation to the study of science and the study of languages. Table 3.5 makes it clear, for example, that boys doing any science course involving biology were, on average, of a lower Band than were the girls; and that the girls pursuing a course in physics tended to be in Band 1. Similarly, Table 3.6 shows that languages were very largely the province of Band 1, that more girls than boys studied languages, and that particularly few boys in Bands 2 and 3 studied any language.

What follows from these three points is that the outcome of the course decision process at the end of second year is not a random distribution of subjects across the whole available range. The subjects followed in the third year are related in quite a marked way to the Bands and the sex of the pupils, and, in the case of the Band 3 pupils, to the approach adopted by the particular school to the curricular needs of such pupils. This means that there are patterns which have imposed themselves, in one way or another, on the outcomes of the course decision process. It may be argued, however, that the subjects *studied* in third year were not necessarily the same as the subjects *chosen* by the pupils. After the option sheets were returned, the school authorities had then to make up the classes and timetables for the following year. In doing so they might have had to disallow some of the subjects requested and substitute others. It is possible, therefore, that the clear connection between the Orders of the subjects studied and the Bands of the pupils arose largely as a result of changes made by the school after the return of the option forms. It is necessary, therefore, to discover whether this relationship is to be observed in the pupils' own choices, or whether it only emerged after the school had adjusted them.

The answer to this question can be sought by comparing the subjects which the pupils in our sample chose, or said they were going to choose, with the subjects in their timetables in the third year. When this is done we find that a number of changes between choice and timetable did take place. Table 3.7 shows the numbers of pupils who did various numbers of subjects in their third year timetables which differed from their original choices or expectations. The figures must, however, be read with some caution. Pupils' original choices were indicated at the time of their interview. As has been said already, these interviews frequently took place before the completion of the choice procedure, and it is possible that some pupils changed their minds after the interview and before the return of the sheet, as a result of the process of guidance and consultation. Our evidence suggests however that the process of consultation, discussion or guidance in most of the schools was not such that it was likely to result in many

TABLE 3.7

NUMBERS OF PUPILS STUDYING VARYING NUMBERS OF SUBJECTS WHICH DIFFERED FROM THEIR ORIGINAL EXPECTATIONS

		Number of subjects altered					
School		*0*	*1*	*2 or more*	*No choice*	*N/A*	*Total*
	1	64	9	1	—	1	75
	2	52	8	9	5	1	75
	3	41	25	6	2	—	74
	4	58	9	7	—	—	74
1st Sample	5	59	9	2	—	4	74
	6	52	3	—	19	—	74
	7	49	15	10	—	—	74
	8	41	27	5	—	1	74
Total		416	105	40	26	7	594
Column total as percentage of total of first 3 columns		74%	19%	7%			
	1	66	8	—	—	—	74
	2	49	13	7	5	—	74
	3	46	22	6	—	—	74
	4	47	14	13	—	—	74
2nd Sample	5	70	2	2	—	—	74
	6	30	10	4	29	1	74
	7	47	16	5	—	6	74
	8	25	34	13	—	2	74
Total		380	119	50	34	9	592
Column total as percentage of total of first 3 columns		69%	22%	9%			

changes in the wishes or intentions of the pupils, and therefore in the choices entered on their sheets. It is likely, therefore, that most of the differences between initial choice and final timetables arose either because teachers, when approached, had discouraged individual pupils from taking certain subjects before the choice-sheets were returned, or because the schools had altered or disallowed the choices when the timetables were being made up.

The first thing to note about the figures is that over 70 per cent of all the pupils in both samples had no changes made, and less than ten percent had two or more changes made. Approximately 93 per cent (first sample) and 92 percent (second sample) of all individual subjects given by the pupils during our interviews as their choices, subsequently appeared in their timetables. When we take into account what has just been said about the possibility of some of these alterations arising from changes of mind by pupils during the choice process, it is clear that the number of direct alterations made by the school authorities after the return of the sheets was small.

A second point of interest in this table is the differences between the schools. In some cases these can be related to circumstances in the schools or to policies adopted by them. In School 8 it was made known to all that final decisions about subjects depended on the numbers required to make up classes. This problem which was particularly acute in a small school meant that a considerable number of alterations had to be made. Something the same applied to a lesser extent in School 7. It seems that School 3 also had some difficulty in fulfilling all the choices, in spite of the fact that the option sheets were filled in during the interview between the pupils and their guidance teachers. In this case the large numbers together with certain staff shortages apparently made some adjustment of choices necessary. In the other schools the number of changes was very small. Thus if we make allowance for those schools with particular difficulties in connection with numbers and staffing, the extent to which schools made changes in pupils' choices for other reasons is reduced even further.

TABLE 3.8

NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS CHANGED FROM ORIGINAL EXPECTATION BY DIRECTION OF CHANGE AND BAND OF PUPIL

1st Sample only

Direction of change	*Down*			*Level*			*Up*		
Band of pupil	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*
School 1	1	2	4	—	1	—	—	1	—
2	—	3	4	—	3	6	—	6	—
3	2	9	8	1	4	1	—	3	3
4	1	6	9	1	—	1	2	3	—
5	—	—	4	—	1	5	—	—	3
6	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
7	1	6	16	—	—	1	2	4	1
8	—	8	6	3	2	3	5	2	4
Total	5	34	51	6	12	17	9	19	11

This information about subjects altered makes it clear that there was no substantial difference between the subjects chosen by the pupils and those they eventually studied in their third year. The position is further clarified if we consider in more detail the kinds of changes which did not take place. Table 3.8 gives an analysis of the total of individual subjects in the timetables which were different from those originally chosen. These changes are analysed by the Band of the pupil and by the direction of change: 'down' being from a higher Order to a lower Order subject, 'up' being from a lower to a higher, and 'level' being a change of subject which involved no change of subject Order*. It will be obvious from the table that the total number of changes in the Orders of the subjects studied was insufficient to account for the relationship which we observed earlier between the Bands of the pupils and the Orders of subjects studied. Certainly the changes made seem to have strengthened that relationship slightly: 51 subjects chosen by Band 3 pupils were changed to lower Order subjects, and only eleven were changed to higher Order ones. When we compare these figures with the total number of subjects studied (amounting to 2699 for the first sample pupils represented in Table 3.2) and even when we allow for some changes whose direction we have not been able to assess, it is obvious that the effect of these changes in subject Order after the return of the sheets must have been slight. In other words, the relationship between pupils' Bands and the Order of the subject was not imposed by the schools after the pupils had made their choices, but was present within the choices made by the pupils themselves.

Thus in examining the course decision process we must not simply ask why pupils chose particular subjects and what influenced their choice. The more fundamental question is: given that the choices of all the individual pupils appear to fit into certain patterns, how did this come about? Or more generally: how, in fact, were decisions about pupils' subjects and courses reached?

(f) *The pupils and their choices*

We may start from the fact that, under the procedures adopted by the schools, most pupils or their parents were offered a variety of options, and were asked to make choices. How were these choices made, and by whom? When asked about this in a general way, the pupils themselves made it clear that they felt the responsibility for choosing to be largely their own. Ninety percent (first sample) felt

* The changes listed in the table include only those where it was clear which subject was substituted for which, and where the Band of the pupil was known. Because of these limitations the total number of changes in this table is less than is indicated by Table 3.7. Because of the coding methods employed, this information was available only for the first sample.

there was a real choice available, and all but one percent of these felt that they, not their parents, had done the choosing, with or without the help and advice of others. So before we consider the part played by others and their influence on the pupils, it is worth looking at the pupils' stated reasons for choosing the subjects they did.

By what criterion did pupils make their choices, or at least justify the choices they had made? If we put together all the reasons given by the second sample pupils for choosing their individual subjects, it becomes clear that there were three main criteria by which they explained their choices. The biggest single number of choices (31 percent of all individual choices) were explained in terms simply of interest in or liking for the subject; 26 percent were explained in terms of the usefulness of the subject for job or career; and 24 percent were said to have been chosen on someone else's recommendation, or because there seemed to be no other possibility. A further 8 percent of the choices were made because the pupil was 'good at' the subject, and there were other sundry reasons. Of the main reasons given, usefulness for a future job (although not the most frequently cited) stood out as the one most clearly perceived and felt. Most pupils (64 percent) chose at least one of their subjects because of its usefulness for a future job or career, and 40 percent of them chose two or more subjects for this reason. Pupils varied considerably, however, in the way in which they related their ideas about jobs to their choice of subjects. Some had no clear idea of a particular job or career they wished to follow, but chose certain subjects because of their general usefulness. Those in this category usually chose only one or two subjects for this reason, the most common being mathematics, physics and chemistry. Others had a particular job (or perhaps more than one job) in mind, and chose some subjects which they felt were important for getting into or doing that job. Many of these also chose only one subject because of its usefulness in this way — often mathematics or science but quite frequently secretarial studies or technical subjects. But there was an interesting small group who explained the majority or all of their choices in terms of the career they intended to pursue. Often such choices were rationally consistent with the job the pupil had in mind. For example, one boy had chosen mathematics, French, physics, chemistry and biology, and gave as his reason for each of them that he wanted to be a doctor. Similarly a girl who was hoping to go into engineering gave this as her reason for choosing maths, physics, engineering science and metalwork. But not infrequently the supposed usefulness of particular subjects for particular jobs was somewhat doubtful or unrealistic. We can quote the case of a girl who had hoped to be a teacher of dancing and physical education and who had chosen French because it would help her "with the ballet side", biology

because it would be "helpful for PE teaching", and fashion and fabric because it would help her "make the costumes". Again, a girl who wanted to be a cook told us she was taking arithmetic "because it is best for me for my job", secretarial studies "because it will be handy if I'm typing out menus", food and nutrition to "help me be a cook", and accounts as they "will be good for making up the books". Further examples of this tendency to rationalise the choice of subjects by referring to jobs include that of the boy who said "I would do French because I'd like to be an architect and I might like to live in France if I don't get a job in Britain"; or the girl who was doing art because she wanted to go into the police and "it might be good to do sketches of people who are wanted"; or the girl who wanted to join the mounted police and was taking biology so that if anything went wrong with the horse she'd "be able to know what's happening". Such rationalised justifications clearly leave the question of the real means by which those subjects came to be chosen wide open, and raise the general issue of whether the subjects which the pupils were expecting to take were in fact freely chosen by the pupils in the way and for the reasons stated. This is an issue to which we will return later. Meanwhile, however, it is important to note that the pupils generally attached considerable importance to the usefulness of subjects for jobs or careers as a criterion for choice. This criterion could clearly not be applied equally to all subjects. Those which were most frequently chosen on the grounds of this type of usefulness included mathematics, the sciences, secretarial studies and technical subjects. It is perhaps worth noting in passing that secretarial studies was seen by quite a number of girls as providing them with a kind of fall back — they could get a job in an office if they failed to enter what they really wanted.

Turning now to the other reasons which pupils gave for their choices, the one most frequently given was simply that they liked the subject or were interested in it. This type of reason was most often given in connection with the choice of history, geography, home economics and art. Only a relatively small number of choices (8 percent) were said to have been made because the pupils felt they were 'good at' the subject in question. Obviously it may well be the case that pupils tend to like the subjects they are good at, and if so 'liking' and being 'good at' may amount to the same thing in many cases. Nevertheless the significant part to note is that generally speaking pupils were not inclined to explain or justify their choices in terms of their performance or ability in their various subjects. Whether or not they may have liked the subjects they were good at, or were good at the subjects they were interested in, it was still the case that their principal positive reasons for choices were their liking of the subject and the usefulness of the subject for their future career.

It was interesting to note what happened when these two criteria appeared to conflict. The pupils were asked if, in addition to their chosen subjects, there were others they would like to do but would not be including among their choices. From their responses it emerged that the subjects which most frequently fell into this category were art (mentioned 47 times — second sample), food & nutrition (31), biology (30), secretarial studies (28) and history (17). It will be noticed that, with the exception of secretarial studies, these are all among the subjects which pupils tended to regard as interesting or enjoyable rather than useful for the future. And in fact in the majority of cases where a subject was desired but not actually chosen the rejected subject was felt to be interesting but it clashed with another which was regarded as useful. One boy put it bluntly, talking about art, "I like it but it won't get me a job". In other words the criterion of usefulness for a future career was given more weight than the criterion of liking or general interest.

Finally, a few words should be said about the third main type of explanation offered by pupils for their choices. We have seen that some 24 percent of all 'choices' were made without the pupil exercising any positive choice. One fifth of these represent the subjects given to those who were not allowed any choice of subjects, most of them in School 6. The rest had been decided in a variety of ways. Sometimes pupils reported that they had been told or instructed by teachers to take certain subjects:

> "I was made to take it (French). The teacher said I should take it and it would help me with a job."
>
> "I didn't choose them (classical studies and general science). I don't like science at all. The teacher picked it."

But at other times they were aware not of instructions but of recommendations, possibly with justifications attached:

> "The teacher said it was a good one to do (chemistry)."
>
> "I was advised to take (general) science because it would help me more to be a secretary."

Others again chose some of these subjects not for any positive reasons but only because they felt that in practice they had no real alternative. The structure of the option sheet together with limits set by their ability or their interests left them feeling that "there was nothing else I could do", or "it was the only one left in the column", or "I couldn't take any other", or "I wasn't any good at the others".

The conclusion to be drawn from the reasons offered by the pupils themselves for their choices is that they do not take us very far in our attempt to understand how decisions about subjects were made. Certainly the pupils were aware that there were real choices to be made, and most of them felt that they themselves had the

responsibility for making them. And clearly many of them had made deliberate choices, and were able to give rational explanations of them. The reasons given suggest that they regarded interest in the subject and its usefulness from the point of view of jobs as the most important criteria for choice. But a closer examination of the stated reasons for choice leaves little doubt that they do not adequately explain the way in which decisions about subjects were reached. Many of the reasons given were rather vague. Some, as we have seen, appeared to be rationalisations rather than reasons, while others were not properly reasons for choice but simply statements that in practice they did not really choose. We may add to this the fact that being good at the subjects was mentioned in relatively few cases, whereas, as has been shown already, the overall pattern of subjects taken was closely related to the pupils' performance in second year. All of this makes it obvious that other factors were at work affecting the decisions about subjects.

Such other factors could, of course, include the influence of other people on the pupils as they made their choices. The pupils of the second sample were asked, in respect of each subject they were expecting to take whether anyone had influenced them in that choice. The result was that of all the individual subject choices, 54 percent were said to have been made without any influence. Teachers were said to have had an influence in 22 percent of the choices, and parents in 12 percent. Only in one percent of the cases was the influence of friends or class mates acknowledged. Put the other way round, forty percent of the pupils made no mention of the influence of teachers, and 62 percent made no mention of the influence of parents.

These figures do not permit us to assume that the decisions about subjects were often the result simply of free and uninfluenced choice on the part of individual pupils. It may be doubted whether they adequately reflect the part played by the various groups of people in the process of decision making about subjects. What they do indicate is that, in so far as pupils were making deliberate choices of individual subjects, they were frequently not conscious of any direct influence. And they would also seem to show that on the whole pupils were more conscious of the influence of teachers than of parents. But the question of how the decisions about subjects were actually reached requires further investigation. We will need to look more closely and in other ways at the role and influence of parents and teachers in the course decision process in the different schools. In doing so we will have cause to return to the responses of the pupils and observe some differences between schools and between pupils of different types. But first a few words should be added about the influence of friends and classmates.

As we have seen, only a negligible number of choices were

attributed by the pupils to the influence of their friends. The same pupils (the second sample) were also asked directly how much they thought they had been influenced by their friends. In reply only six percent said they had been influenced quite a lot, 18 percent acknowledged a little influence, while 71 percent claimed that they had not been influenced at all. Those who admitted a lot of influence were mostly in Band 3, but numbers were too small for much to be built on this. There was also no significant difference between the schools in this respect. Further discussion with the pupils, however, revealed two things. The first was that many of them had been led to believe that being influenced by friends was frowned on:

> "We were told to pick what *you* think, not what your friends pick."
>
> "The teacher said 'Never mind what your friends are saying'."
>
> "The teachers say: 'Don't go by what your pals say'."

In some cases the issue was felt to be a moral one:

> "It's no' right to choose because of your friends."

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that few pupils openly acknowledged to an interviewer that their friends had influenced them. Secondly, however, a good number of pupils who denied any influence on themselves of their friends' choices made out that most others were influenced in this way:

> "Some friends choose the same, to be in the same class."
>
> "A lot do because they'd like to be in the same class as their friends."
>
> "Some could choose because of their friends, but I think they're stupid."

These points suggest that the influence of friends was greater than most pupils were ready to acknowledge, perhaps even to themselves. Those who did admit it, however, sometimes gave some insight into how the influence operated. Sometimes it was a matter of helping them choose between two subjects which were otherwise evenly balanced:

> "Only in history and geography. My best pal's taking history, so I took history."

More frequently, however, it was a matter of choosing subjects along with their friends in order to try and stay together in their classes in the next year. The fear of being separated from their friends obviously affected some pupils:

> "I took the same subjects as my friends because I didn't want to go into a class by myself."
>
> "I wanted to be with my pals so we decided together."

One girl seemed afraid that her parents might make decisions which would remove her from her friends:

> "I never took the sheet home. I wanted to be in the same class as my friends, so I chose the same as her."

It can probably be assumed that this kind of influence was stronger on the pupils generally than most of them admitted. Nearly all of them agreed that they had discussed the option sheet with their friends, and almost half of both the boys and the girls said they had discussed it quite a lot. Furthermore, a few whose reply to the general question was that they had not been influenced at all, did in fact refer to their friends when talking about particular subjects. Certainly most teachers believed that pupils, particularly the less academic pupils, were affected by their friends' choices. Only ten percent of the random sample of teachers in all the schools felt that there was little influence of this kind.

On the other hand, what evidence there is would suggest that the *direct* influence of friends and classmates, while no doubt greater than the pupils admitted, was nevertheless not very substantial. For one thing, the pupils' parents did not observe any considerable influence exerted by friends. Of all the (second sample) parents interviewed, three quarters thought their children had not been influenced at all in this way, and only four percent felt they had been considerably influenced. When we take this together with the denial of influence by most pupils, and the declared belief in the importance of choosing what is right for oneself, it would appear that the majority did not consciously or deliberately choose in the light of what their friends were doing. What would seem to be more likely is that the influence of friends was part of an unseen pattern of assumptions and expectations, rather than something exerted directly in such a way that it could be observed independently. To this tentative conclusion we will return later. In the meantime, we must acknowledge that the feeling on the part of pupils that they *should* not be influenced in their choices by what their friends were doing, made it virtually impossible to assess the extent of the influence in a more adequate way.*

(d) *The parents' part*

We turn now to the part played by parents in the process of subject choice and course decision. As was said earlier, visits were paid to the homes of all the pupils in both samples, a total of close to 1200 homes in all. In the Borders area some of these were situated in remote country districts.

Despite repeated efforts we still failed to contact a small

*A similar conclusion was reached by Reid *et al* (1974) and by Reid and McDowell (1976).

proportion of the parents (20 in the first sample and 30 in the second in the Borders; and in Lanarkshire seven in the first sample and two in the second). Nevertheless, in 95 percent of the cases in each sample contact was made with at least one parent in the home. The following discussion of the involvement of parents in decisions about subjects is based partly on these interviews and partly on what was said by the pupils and teachers.

As we have seen every school attempted to involve parents in the subject choice process. The option sheets were sent to parents by means of the children, often with an explanatory letter or notes, and parents were invited to attend a meeting in connection with the choices. The assumption was that parents had the right to state what subjects they would like their children to study. A point to note at the start is that most parents expressed themselves satisfied with the choice of subjects available to their children. Less than a fifth (19 percent — first sample; 14 percent — second sample) expressed any dissatisfaction at all, and frequently their complaints were not strongly felt. Those who had some dissatisfaction were spread fairly evenly over all the schools and among families of all occupational levels. In every school most parents had no complaints. The question then arises: to what extent had they been involved in the subject choice process?

Judging from the initial reception given by the parents to the interviewers one might have assumed that they had been considerably involved. For it was apparent from our visits that the vast majority of the parents were interested in their children and their schooling. Most of them were only too pleased to welcome visitors calling in connection with their children's schooling, and many of them talked at length about it, in ways which made the conduct of orderly interviews difficult.

Nevertheless, in spite of the interest shown by most parents in their children's schooling, what emerged from the interviews was that few of them were actively involved in the process of subject choice. On the basis of their accounts of what had happened in connection with the choice of subjects we attempted to categorise all the parents of the second sample according to the extent of their involvement in the process. From our conversations with them it appeared that the parents could be divided into three groups. There were some who were considerably involved in the subject choice process. They had taken an interest, studied the available options, discussed the matter seriously with their children, and helped to decide the subjects. These parents had not necessarily made the decisions themselves, but they had at least taken an informed and active interest. Sometimes they spoke of giving help and guidance generally:

"We helped her choose academic subjects to keep her choices as open as possible."

"We guided him to take a broad course not binding him to one job."

Sometimes they made it clear that they had taken responsibility for certain decisions:

"We debated about technical but he's not really good at it, and we couldn't see him in that line. We thought accounts would be more use. And he doesn't like French, but we felt he should keep on a language."

"We chose the ones he could cope with best, and discussed it with him and his teachers."

In a few cases the parents had been unhappy about the subjects available to or recommended for their child and had taken the matter up with the school:

"We more or less forced the school to let her take art."

"I didn't agree with the recommendations made for Andrew. They wanted him to do three languages but I felt the scope wasn't wide enough. I went up to the school to discuss it with them . . . so they changed it."

In addition, one or two parents had made their own private enquiries about subjects which were necessary or desirable for future courses or careers.

At the other extreme there were some parents who had had little or no discussion with their children, and had let them make the decisions themselves. A few of them appeared not to have seen an option sheet, and some who had seen the sheet felt unable to understand or help:

"He never brought the form home, so I know nothing about it."

"I don't know the subjects she's chosen. She chose them herself. Janet discusses nothing about the school."

"We really haven't a clue about some subjects. It's up to him — he knows best."

Others simply indicated that they left the matter entirely to their children:

"I left it to him to take what he likes and wanted."

"I said: 'Please yourself, it's up to you'."

In fact there was a fairly widespread feeling that parents should not push their children in any particular direction, and therefore matters like this ought to be left to the pupils themselves. As one mother put it:

"We never influence our kids."

In addition many parents felt that it was really up to the school to advise the children, and that teachers should know best about these things:

"The teachers more or less advised him as they know what they're best at."

"The school decided and we didn't interfere."

In addition to those who were considerably involved and those who were not involved at all, there was also a somewhat larger middle group who had had sufficient interest to discuss the matter with their children, but having had some discussion left the matter for the children to decide, without further involvement on their part.

The allocation of the parents to one of these three groups was inevitably somewhat arbitrary, even though it was based on the parents' own accounts. Nevertheless, it does provide a summary of the situation as it appeared to the interviewers. Table 3.9 shows the

TABLE 3.9

INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN SUBJECT CHOICE PROCESS

2nd Sample only

School	*Left entirely to child*		*Discussed but decision by child*		*Considerably involved*		*Unclassified*		*Total*	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
1	13	18	30	40	28	38	3	4	74	100
2	21	29	28	38	17	23	7	10	73	100
3	39	53	17	23	6	8	11	15	73	99
4	19	26	49	66	2	3	4	5	74	100
5	25	38	32	49	6	9	2	3	65	99
6	7	11	30	46	5	8	23*	35*	65	100
7	16	25	34	54	10	16	3	.5	63	100
8	27	39	33	47	10	14	—	—	70	100
Total	167	30	253	45	84	15	53	10	557	100

* This figure represents the parents of 23 pupils at this school who were offered no choice of subject.

numbers of parents in each category in the various schools. What is most obvious is that the number of parents who appeared to be 'considerably involved' was small, representing only 15 percent of the total. This was only half the number of those who were apparently not involved at all. The biggest single group were those who had had some discussion but left the matter to the child in the end. Generally speaking, therefore, the level of parental involvement did not appear

to be high. There were, however, considerable differences between the eight schools. The number of considerably involved parents was significantly higher than average in School 1 and, to a lesser extent, in School 2. Schools 3, 4, 5 and 6 had few in this category. It must also be noted, however, that the extent of involvement in subject choice varied with the fathers' occupational level (Table 3.10). The higher

TABLE 3.10

PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN SUBJECT CHOICE PROCESS BY FATHER'S OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

2nd Sample only

Father's occupational level	*Left to child*		*Discussed*		*Considerably involved*		*Unclassified*		*Total*	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Professional	4	9	18	42	21	49	—	—	43	100
Managers & employers	9	14	35	53	18	27	4	6	66	100
Other non-manual workers	15	24	34	55	11	18	2	3	62	100
Foremen, supervisors & self employed	22	35	27	44	8	13	5	8	62	100
Skilled manual workers	69	37	77	41	18	10	22	12	186	100
Semi-skilled workers	30	50	21	35	5	8	4	7	60	100
Unskilled workers	11	34	13	41	—	—	8	25	32	100
Farmers & farm workers	3	10	20	67	3	10	4	13	30	100
Others	—	—	1	100	—	—	—	—	1	100

the occupational level of the father, the more the parents were involved. The extent of parental involvement was also related, to some extent to the pupils' performance in school, that is, to their Band. But professional or managerial parents were little affected by their children's Band, whereas those working class parents who were 'considerably involved' tended to be the ones whose children were doing well. It will also be noticed that there is some parallel between the pattern of parental involvement in subject choice in the eight schools (Table 3.9) and the pattern of fathers' occupations (Table 2.2). Those schools which had the largest number of 'considerably involved' parents also had relatively large numbers of professional and managerial families. These figures suggest that parental involvement in subject choice had more to do with the family background than with policies or practices of the schools.

Moving away from this general question about the extent of parental involvement, we ask now: What kind of advice did parents

give their children in connection with their subjects? Here again it appeared that only a minority of parents (36 percent of both samples together) said they had given positive advice to their children, or recommended particular subjects. Once more the largest numbers were found in Schools 1 and 2. The reasons for their recommendations were sometimes that the child was good at the subject, and sometimes that the subject was seen as useful. Over a quarter of the parents (28 percent) said they gave no advice to their children at all, while a third (33 percent) gave only vague or general advice. Sometimes this was a matter of advising their children to "choose the things you're good at", but in many cases it was more general advice about school, in particular the encouragement to "stick in". It is further interesting to note which subjects were most frequently recommended by those parents who did give positive advice. The most frequently recommended subjects were English, mathematics and French. Since English was compulsory in every school, and pupils frequently had little choice as to what kind of mathematics or arithmetic they should do, it seems that the advice of a number of parents had little direct bearing on the choice process.

The conclusion to which we are driven, therefore, is that only a small proportion of parents gave their children relevant positive advice about particular subjects. This is borne out by what the pupils said on the same topic. Admittedly over half the first sample pupils (52 percent) said their parents had recommended at least one subject, but few pupils felt their choices had been influenced by their parents. Nearly two thirds (63 percent — 2nd sample) reported that none of their choices was influenced by their parents and only 15 percent said that two or more of their choices were. Moreover most of the parents themselves did not think they influenced their children very much — only 21 percent thought they represented the biggest influence on them.

If the majority of parents were not very actively involved in decision-making or advising their children about subjects, what was their response to the invitation to attend a special meeting at the school? We have seen that every school arranged such a meeting as part of the course decision procedure, and invitations were sent to the parents, usually along with the option sheets. It is interesting to note (see Table 3.11) that in the majority of cases (61 percent, 1st sample; 59 percent, 2nd sample) one or both of the parents did attend the meeting, and a further 2 percent (each sample) made a special visit to the school at another time to discuss the choice of subjects. But the table shows that the numbers attending the meetings varied from one school to another. In particular it is worth noting that the numbers in Schools 3 and 7 were significantly lower than elsewhere. The fact that School 3 serves a more widely scattered community than the other

TABLE 3.11

NUMBERS OF PARENTS WHO ATTENDED MEETINGS ABOUT SUBJECT CHOICE

	1st Sample							*2nd Sample*						
	Attended meeting		*Paid special visit*		*Did not attend or not clear*		*Total*	*Attended meeting*		*Paid special visit*		*Did not attend or not clear*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
School 1	46	63	1	1	26	36	73	55	74	1	1	18	24	74
2	49	67	6	8	18	25	73	47	64	0	0	26	36	73
3	35	49	2	3	35	49	72	28	38	1	1	44	60	73
4	41	56	0	0	32	44	73	54	73	4	5	16	22	74
5	41	61	0	0	26	39	67	36	55	0	0	29	45	65
6	47	68	1	1	21	30	69	43	65	0	0	23	35	66
7	30	43	1	1	39	56	70	22	34	2	3	41	63	65
8	52	78	0	0	15	22	67	52	74	1	1	17	24	70
Total	341	61	11	2	212	38	564	337	60	9	2	214	38	560

Lanarkshire schools, and the fact that transport is difficult for many working people living in that area make the small attendance at that school very understandable. School 7 serves an even more scattered community. But School 8, which serves a similar community, managed to attract unusually large numbers to its meetings on each occasion. There would appear to be another reason for the small attendances in School 7. In our discussion of the subject choice procedures (see Section a above) we observed that in this school the parents' meeting was held after the completed forms had been returned and was attended mainly by parents who still had problems which they wished to have solved. It appears that many parents felt there was no need for them to attend a meeting of this kind.

To carry further the question of the contact between school and parents, we enquired whether either parent had been to the school at any other time. The number of homes where no parent had ever visited the school amounted to some 15 percent of the total in each sample, but this varied from eight percent in School 1 and nine percent in School 8 to 37 percent in School 3. In School 7, however, the percentage was 14, an indication that general contact between school and parents was as good here as anywhere else, in spite of the poor attendance at the meeting to do with subject choice. Overall the figures suggest that if we consider only the attendance of parents at the school for meetings or special purposes, the contact between school and parents was reasonably good in most cases.

Furthermore most of those parents who attended the special meetings dealing with subject choice were reasonably satisfied with the way the meetings were run. Fifty percent made only favourable comments, and 23 percent only unfavourable comments. Many felt the meetings were informative:

> "It was very good — they told us exactly what goes on."
>
> "You could ask anything and could say anything and the teachers didn't brush you off."

The principal criticisms voiced by parents in nearly every school was that there were too many parents trying to see a few teachers in a short time. The result was periods of waiting in queues and only a few minutes with any one teacher:

> "There's too much to do in a single evening. There is very little time to spend with individual teachers."
>
> "I didn't like it. It was too busy. I feel the teachers have no time to talk."

The scheme adopted by School 4 by which parents saw only one specially briefed teacher (see Section a above) met with favourable reaction from most parents. The meetings organised in School 1 came in for more criticism than elsewhere, but it must be borne in mind that in this school there was an exceptionally large number of "considerably involved" parents, and such parents tended to have particularly high expectations of meetings of this kind.

In reply to a general question on the topic, most parents indicated that they were reasonably satisfied with the contact between home and school. When asked for their comments on this matter, 53 percent made only favourable comments, and only 18 percent were entirely critical, the rest having mixed or uncertain views. Criticisms were voiced most of all by School 3 parents and least by those of School 5, but the differences between schools were not large.

This discussion of the part played by parents in the process of subject choice can be gathered together into three main points. The first is that on the whole parents did not seem to be very actively involved in giving advice or helping to make decisions about subjects. Those who were considerably involved were mostly in middle-class or professional families. There is also little to suggest that most parents influenced pupils to any great extent in the choice of subjects. Here it is worth observing that most of the random sample of teachers whom we interviewed took a different view of the influence of parents. Only 12 percent of them thought parents had little influence, although 36 percent felt the influence was mostly confined to interested parents. Generally, teachers tended to give the parents credit for a larger part in the process than they appeared to us to play.

From their own account it seems that most parents gave only vague and general advice if they gave any, and often recommended subjects about which no choice or decision had to be made. In other words, the part played by parents in the subject choice process and the influence they exerted were small.

Secondly, the small part played by most parents in the process did not mean that they were not interested in their children's schooling. Generally they were only too keen to discuss the topic. In addition many went to the schools' parents' meetings even though they had not been involved in any real discussions about subjects with their children, or given them positive advice. And even those who did not attend the meetings were not entirely uninterested. This statement conflicts with the view of a majority of the teachers who were interviewed. More than two-thirds of the teachers felt that apathy or lack of interest was a principal reason for parents' non-attendance at the meetings. The teachers had noticed that those who did not attend were mostly the parents of children who performed poorly in school. Very frequently they expressed the view that these were the parents they would like to see but seldom did see. Our evidence certainly indicates that most of those who did not go to the meetings were parents of pupils in Band 3, — that is, of those who had performed least well in the school. Nevertheless, what is even more characteristic of the non-attending parents is that the fathers were manual workers, (a disproportionate number of them semi-skilled or unskilled) and that the parents had themselves received no formal education beyond the age of 14 or 15. Many of them felt uneasy about visiting the school and apprehensive about talking to teachers — a point which a number of teachers did in fact acknowledge. To such parents, who had themselves left school perhaps twenty-five years previously and had probably not done very well even then, a large modern comprehensive school can be an awe-inspiring place, and present-day education can seem unfamiliar and bewildering. Many of those to whom we spoke felt they could not understand modern schooling or make decisions about subjects to be studied by young people who were continuing schooling longer than they had done. We may add that most of the letters sent by the schools to parents about subject choice were written in a style which was too difficult for such parents to understand, and were sometimes dauntingly long. It is, therefore, small wonder that a number of parents felt they were unable to help or advise their young people, and lacked the courage to attend the meetings arranged for them. While there were, of course, a few who had little interest in their children's schooling, it would be a mistake to assume that failure to give their children advice, or to attend the parents' meetings were indications of such a lack of interest. They were indications, rather, of a gulf between schools and at least some

of the parents which it is very hard to bridge.* This is a point to which we shall return later.

The third point to be made about the parents and subject choice is that most of them viewed the whole question of subjects and courses as basically a matter for the school. All but a few of them accepted uncritically the options made available to their children, and were happy with the subjects they were studying. Generally they were satisfied both with the curriculum and with the procedures for decisions about subjects. Those parents who voiced criticisms of the schools usually spoke about school discipline or about organisational matters such as the size of the school. Very few made any criticisms of the curriculum. Furthermore, most parents felt that the school was better able to assess their children's ability than they were themselves, and they tended to accept this assessment. It followed that teachers were in a better position to know what kind of course their children should follow and what subjects were appropriate for them. Advising or making recommendations to pupils about subjects was, therefore, basically the responsibility of the school. Many parents expressed their confidence that the teachers "know what is best" for the pupils. In some cases this belief went along with a philosophy that it is wrong for parents to "push" or "force" their children. Many working class parents in particular felt that "it's her life" or "it's up to him". More than anything else they wanted their children to be happy. Pushing them beyond their natural capabilities was not likely to lead to happiness and would do the children no service. Thus they were, in the main, content to accept the advice or direction of the school. With a few exceptions, the parents were not asking for different subjects, a wider choice, more opportunities or a better education for their children than they were being offered by the schools.

(e) *The Teachers' Part*

Having looked at the pupils' own deliberate or conscious choosing, at the influence of friends and the part played by parents, we are bound to conclude that none of these takes us very far in our attempt to understand how decisions about subjects to be taken were actually reached. This brings us finally to the schools and the teachers. We have already summarised (in Section a above) the procedures adopted by the various schools in connection with subject choice. Now we must ask: to what extent and in what ways did these

*Reid *et al.* (1974) observed that "comparatively few minimally-educated, working-class parents evaded their guidance responsibilities because they 'couldn't care less'. Most parents in the 'no-contact' group attempted to become involved but were faced with formidable obstacles in doing so," (p 149). A similar point is made by Jackson & Marsden (1962).

procedures and the teachers who were involved in them influence, guide and direct the pupils, or determine the subjects to be studied? To answer this we must look at the various steps in the procedures and the different kinds of contact which pupils had with teachers in connection with subject choice.

We may start by considering the formal procedures for explanation and for guidance adopted by the schools. In every school the procedure began with some explanation to the pupils about the whole process. In most cases pupils had been prepared for the process during their social education periods, before the choice procedure began. In others (eg School 6) there were no special lessons, but a teacher went round each class to explain the process and its implications. Sometimes teachers of subjects which were new to second year pupils were asked to speak about their subject to second year classes or assemblies. All this preparatory activity was generally aimed at ensuring that pupils knew what the rules were, had some idea about the nature of those subjects on the sheet with which they were not as yet familiar, and understood something of the implications of the decisions to be made for their future.

In some of the schools it was made clear from the start (either during preparatory lessons or at the time when the option sheets were distributed) that entry into particular subjects, or into certificate level work in particular subjects, was dependent on the pupils' performance in second year. In School 2 pupils were told to find out from the principal subject teachers concerned whether or not they would be allowed to take the subjects they were interested in at certificate level. In Schools 4 and 8 where there was a division between certificate and non-certificate subjects, it was made clear that entry into those above the line depended on their having attained a certain grade or mark in their work in the subject so far. In School 7 each pupil's option sheet included a recommendation about the kind of course he should take, while in School 6 a number of pupils were assigned to a non-certificate course without any choice of subjects. Thus in most of the schools there was some indication of limitation or restriction on the choices at the start of the procedure. Apart from this, it was possible for teachers to influence pupils and their choices in a variety of ways, and it is important to consider them in some detail.

The first question is: to what extent did teachers influence pupils ideas and choices through their direct personal guidance and counselling? The opportunities which teachers had to advise pupils in connection with subjects varied with the school. An important point to note is that in five of the schools there was no systematic arrangement by which every pupil was seen or interviewed by a guidance or other teacher in connection with the choice of subjects.

This did take place, however, in the other three schools. We have already seen that in School 3 the option forms were filled in during interviews between guidance staff and individual pupils, and that the subjects selected at that time became the school's recommendation to the parents. The pupils' accounts of what took place at these interviews varied considerably. Some reported that they selected subjects fairly freely themselves:

> "The housemaster showed me the sheet. I said what I wanted and he agreed."

Most, however, were conscious that the guidance teacher's agreement depended on how well they had done in the subject:

> "He gave me all my first choices because I was good enough at them."
>
> "They let you do what you want mostly, but some subjects are put down for you because you're good at it."

And a number reported that the teacher had some or all of the recommended subjects already picked:

> "He asked what subjects I liked. But he had subjects already picked."
>
> "The housemasters picked columns B, C and D. I only really chose geography. The teacher picked the rest."
>
> "They had some wrote down for you, I don't know how."

Most of those who were aware that subjects were selected for them did not seem to object to this. But there were a few who did:

> "I don't like the way they tell you what subjects are for you. You can't take the subject you want. They judge by your marks what's good for you."

Some did indeed report that guidance teachers had taken acount of things other than marks, particularly career intentions:

> "They ask what job you want most, and then recommend suitable subjects."
>
> "They ask what career you want. If you pick a subject which is not involved in your career, they won't let you do it."

But the overall impression received from the pupils is that teachers made recommendations, or perhaps decisions, on the basis mainly of the pupils' marks, and that choices were permitted if pupils had done well in a variety of subjects.

School 5 also had an arrangement for individual interviews, though at the time of our research the contact between guidance teachers and pupils, who were called up to the front during a meeting in the hall, was brief. Here again the guidance teachers, having before them recommendations from principal subject teachers about the individual pupils, helped the pupil to fill in the sheets. In this school,

however, this was only a preliminary selection of subjects, which formed the basis for the later steps in the choice procedure. The last stage in the procedure was a further brief individual interview, this time with the head teacher. Here again there some who reported that teachers enquired about their career intentions:

> "Mr — asked what I wanted to be and advised what I needed."

But a larger number spoke of how they had been advised or permitted to do certain subjects on the basis of marks. In some cases it was a matter of being told how many CSE or SCE subjects they should take:

> "The housemaster said I must choose from CSE subjects."

But a more general view was that

> "If you're quite good they let you take them. If not they advise you not to."

In School 8 guidance teachers interviewed every pupil to discuss the options and offer advice, but did not fill in the sheet or make any formal recommendations. Also in this school, as we have seen, the conditions for entry into SCE subjects had already been made known to the pupils before the interviews. Thus the accounts of the interviews suggested a general discussion rather than the giving of any detailed advice or indication of restricting at this point:

> "The guidance teacher asked what I would like to take. He went over the ones I didn't want to take. He suggested ones I should take."
>
> "Mr — asked what I wanted to do. He never really told me what I should do."

These three schools, which had arrangements for individual interviews, were the only ones where the majority of the pupils reported that they had had a talk with a guidance teacher about their subjects.* The other schools had not found it possible to arrange for an interview for every pupil, but this did not mean there was no contact between individual pupils and teachers in this connection. In every school (including the ones with a programme of individual interviewing) it was possible for pupils to consult members of staff and get their advice. Our evidence about the numbers who did so is necessarily incomplete since our interviews with the pupils were conducted during the period when they could be consulting teachers. But something may be learned from combining the responses of the pupils with information from other sources. Few pupils in any of the

*The fact that some in these schools did not speak of an individual interview must not necessarily be taken to mean that they did not in fact have one. Evidence from the project generally suggests that some pupils are forgetful and unreliable. Information from them must be balanced by information from other sources — and vice versa.

schools reported any individual contact with teachers (apart from the systematic interviews in the three schools discussed above). Only one in twenty of the pupils in the five schools where there was no overall programme of interviews reported that they had talked personally with any teacher about their subjects. Nevertheless, it is probable that in making their responses they did not include brief enquiries made of individual subject or guidance teachers about whether they should or could do a particular subject. Evidence from the teachers and from our own observation suggests that, in some schools in particular, pupils quite frequently consulted teachers briefly in this way. The extent to which this happened and the type of teachers who were most frequently consulted depended in part on the policy of the school. In School 1 pupils were encouraged to consult subject teachers, as well as guidance teachers or the heads of middle or lower school if they wished. One senior member of staff had the impression that many children were actively seeking advice from a variety of sources:

> "I think everybody gets into the act, because children are flying around asking for advice."

But two thirds of the principal subject teachers said that very few came to consult them. Many subject teachers spoke to their classes about their subject, but the extent to which they advised individual pupils was apparently limited. On the other hand, the heads of lower and middle school were consulted by quite a large number of pupils. In School 2, pupils had to go to see the principal teacher of any subject they wished to study. Apart from this there was not much individual consultation of subject teachers or guidance teachers. Pupils were advised to go and see the head of middle school if they needed help. But since they had all discovered which subjects they could study at certificate level, not many pupils felt the need of further advice. As one principal teacher put it:

> "In 90 percent of cases it is enough for kids to have had a talk from the principal teacher of each subject in class, plus their parents' advice ... So only a few kids need individual guidance."

In School 4 it was again made clear to the pupils that the head of middle school was available for consultation, but not many pupils went to see him. Similarly ten out of the twelve principal teachers said few pupils consulted them or members of their department, and three said it almost never happened. School 6 is the one where the pupils doing non-certificate subjects were not given a choice, and there was, therefore, no cause for them to consult any teacher. Any of the others who wished advice tended to go either to the careers teacher, (who had explained the sheet to many classes) or to the head of lower school. Again only two out of nine principal subject teachers

interviewed did report that some pupils came to consult them. One teacher gave his reason why few wanted advice:

> "With the majority it falls naturally as a result of the last two years. They discover for themselves the ones at which they are most able. I don't find they come to ask. It's just really a question of what they would be doing anyway, not whether they should do it."

In School 7 only one of the principal teachers said that "a lot" of pupils came for advice. All the others interviewed said this happened little. But a number of pupils did apparently go to the lower school office to consult either the head of lower school or the guidance teacher with responsibility for the lower school. More than one teacher expressed the view, however, that "they sort themselves out", usually on the basis of their subjects and their marks during their first and second years.

If we lay this evidence from the teachers alongside the fact mentioned above, that in those five schools which had no systematic interviews only 5 percent of the pupils reported having had an individual talk with any teacher about subject choice, it is clear that the number of pupils in these schools who received any individual guidance or advice about choosing subjects was small. It is impossible to say just how many spoke to teachers of one kind or another, perhaps briefly and informally, about particular subjects. In so far as they did seek advice, in most schools they approached guidance teachers or the head of lower or middle school. On the evidence of the principal teachers few pupils consulted subject teachers. And those who had had a fuller discussion about their course as a whole were fewer still.

When pupils did have contact with a teacher, either in the form of an interview or of a brief enquiry about a particular subject, what sort of advice were they given? The teachers who were interviewed were asked about the basis of the advice given to individual pupils in the school. Of the random sample of teachers interviewed 90 percent said that the pupils' ability and previous marks were taken into consideration, whereas only just over a third understood that teachers' advice took account of the pupils' career intentions, and less than a sixth believed that pupils' interests were considered. A somewhat larger proportion (55 percent) of those principal teachers who said they were sometimes consulted by pupils said they considered questions of career in offering their advice. A few also mentioned the pupil's own interests:

> "I ask if they know what they're going to be doing, and also if they like it, because I think if they enjoy it then if possible they should be allowed to do it."

But the main emphasis in the comments of teachers of all kinds and in all the schools was on the marks or the ability of the pupils:

> "It's mainly marks to be honest. Often they (ie, teachers) don't bother with careers intentions because so many seem not to know what they want to do." (Principal teacher)
>
> "It must be to some extent career intentions, but unfortunately it's not what happens. It's how good they are at the subject." (Head of middle school)
>
> "All guidance teachers tend to advise by looking at marks, consulting with other teachers on what they think they can do." (Guidance teacher)

Whatever the intention or practice of the teachers, the large majority of the pupils and their parents had the impression that the basis of any advice given by teachers or of decisions made by the school about the pupils' subjects was their marks or ability. Of the first sample pupils 23 percent felt unable to comment on this point, but of the remainder, 84 percent referred to marks or ability in one way or another. Some certainly mentioned other things as well:

> "It depends what your work's like through the whole year, and how you behave in class."
>
> "They go by how clever you are, and what you might do when you leave school."
>
> "They see what sort of mark you get, and whether you like the subject."

But many referred only to marks or ability. The parents of the first sample also were overwhelmingly of the impression that teachers based their advice on the pupil's performance. Of those who felt capable of offering a view on this point again 84 percent thought it all depended on marks, and only three percent believed that teachers considered the pupils' future job intentions. These views of pupils and parents indicate that the schools had in one way or another given them the impression that it was the performance of the pupils in the class work which counted more than anything else, as far as the schools were concerned.

To complete an answer to the question about the extent of teachers' influence on choice through their guidance or counselling activities, we can look at the responses by pupils and parents to a number of questions which have to do with the part played by teachers in the subject choice process. These are summarised in Table 3.12. The first thing to note here is that the extent or the effect of the advice offered by teachers was not considered to be very great, either by pupils or parents. Row 1 shows that only 16 percent of the first sample of pupils in all the schools together indicated that their choice of subjects generally was made in the light of advice from teachers.

TABLE 3.12

PUPILS' & PARENTS' VIEWS OF TEACHERS' INFLUENCE

	School								
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*Total*
Percentage of pupils who indicated that their subject choice was made in the light of teacher's advice — *1st Sample*	16	5	20	22	41	5	6	11	16
Percentage of individual subjects said by pupils to have been chosen as the result of teachers' influence — *2nd Sample*	29	32	30	22	25	8	14	17	22
Percentage of parents who thought teachers had given pupils advice about subject choice — *2nd Sample*	33	34	24	43	27	23	15	33	29
Percentage of parents who thought teachers were the greatest influence on pupils' choices — *2nd Sample*	26	26	40	38	27	10	2	21	24

From row 2 it will be seen that less than a quarter (22 percent) of all individual subject choices made by second sample pupils were said by the pupils to have been influenced by teachers. As to parents' views, row 3 indicates that 29 percent thought that school teachers had given the pupils definite guidance (as opposed to vague general advice on the one hand and directions or instructions on the other). While row 4 shows that 24 percent of the same parents believed that the greatest influence on their children's choices was that of teachers. Generally speaking, therefore, most of the pupils and their parents did not feel that teachers had given very much advice, or that the guidance offered by teachers had had a major effect on the choices.

A second thing to note is that there is no marked difference in the responses of both pupils and parents about the influence of teachers, between Schools 3, 4 and 8, where each pupil received an individual interview, and the others where there was no systematic interviewing of all pupils in connection with subject choice. Awareness of guidance given by teachers appeared particularly low in Schools 6 and 7. It is true that in School 7 there was little emphasis placed on guidance and consultation about subjects. In School 6, on the other hand, it may be argued that the percentages are distorted because a number were offered no choice of subjects, and so there could be no occasion for guidance about choices in their case. Generally

speaking, however there is no marked pattern of difference between the schools.

It is worth noting also that there was little difference between the three Bands in the extent to which they were aware of the influence of teachers. It is true that more of the parents of Band 1 pupils (37 percent) than of Band 3 pupils (16 percent) thought that teachers offered advice or guidance to pupils about subjects. But amongst the pupils such a difference was not apparent.

The conclusion to which we are driven by the various responses and pieces of information from different sources is that the giving of advice or guidance by teachers to individual pupils had only a limited effect upon the choices of most pupils. All the indications suggest that only a relatively small number of pupils were influenced directly by the counselling of teachers. In five of the schools any counselling which took place usually took the form of a reply to a pupil's enquiry as to whether he could or should do a particular subject, a reply based usually on the pupil's performance in that subject, or subject area, to date. Even in the three schools where systematic individual interviews were undertaken, the evidence from teachers, pupils and parents suggests that what took place on these occasions was frequently not perceived as counselling or guidance, but rather a more limited discussion as to what the pupil could or could not do, based again on the pupil's performance. To say this is not to imply that the teachers responsible for interviewing made no attempt at broader and more genuine counselling. But because of the limitations of time and the requirements of the process, their efforts were not usually perceived or experienced in this way.

The next question which arises is: to what extent did teachers influence pupils and their choices in other ways, that is other than through direct personal guidance and counselling? This was a question we put to the random sample of teachers in all the schools. Their responses revealed an issue which is not usually raised in discussions of subject choice. This is the extent to which subject teachers influenced individual pupils by the practice known as "touting" — that is, deliberately competing to get the more able pupils into their departments. This was mentioned spontaneously by over a third (36 percent) of the teachers. Sometimes this was seen as a perfectly natural desire on the part of teachers to persuade able pupils to study their subject:

> "I feel we are in competition with other departments for pupils. We try and encourage a pupil to do a subject if he is good at it."

But others describe the activities of some teachers in more striking language:

> "Everyone curries favour with the good kids."

> "Some really go out on a propaganda campaign."
>
> "There's lots of competition to get the best pupils. Others are steered away. There's lots of propaganda. They don't want the stupid ones in their department."
>
> "It's a little bit like a transfer operation for footballers. Teachers bid for certain pupils. This is where problems come in in placing the less able pupils."

Similarly a number of principal teachers interviewed spoke of "canvassing", "campaigning" or "recruiting". The existence of "touting" was recognised as a problem by some of the headteachers, three of whom referred to it when they were asked about the part played by subject teachers in the course decision process. One of them commented:

> "This is difficult. I try to guard against touting, so I don't suggest that subject teachers advise. But pupils do go to them, and I don't say they mustn't. But if there is touting I go and see the teacher."

Another was even more blunt:

> "Subject teachers play an informal part. It's not formal because there are too many crooks. They go around using sales techniques."

It is obviously difficult to draw a line between such undesirable "touting" and the good and natural desire of teachers to interest pupils in their subject. But the widespread comments made it clear that there was a tendency in all schools for some teachers both to compete for the "better" pupils, and to try to avoid the poorer ones. More references to such activities were made by teachers in School 3 than in any other, but it cannot be simply concluded that the practice was more widespread there than elsewhere. It is even more difficult to assess the effect of such a competition for pupils on the process of subject choice. In so far as this was actively done it is bound to have influenced the process to some degree. But perhaps the most important thing about these comments is that they draw attention to the fact that teachers were keen to attract "good pupils" to their departments. Whether or not this desire led to active "touting", the attitudes and desires of teachers cannot fail to have made some impression on the pupils. It would not be lost on them that their performance in class was what influenced teachers most in their attitudes to pupils and the subjects they should do.

In addition to the effects of any such competition for pupils, teachers must have exerted an influence on pupils unintentionally or unconsciously in the course of their teaching and their contact with them. Most teachers felt that the way they approached and taught

their subject inevitably had an effect on pupils' choices. As one teacher put it:

> "It's unavoidable. When you're teaching you can't avoid influencing."

This point was made more frequently by teachers than by pupils, most of whom either did not recognise or did not acknowledge influence of this kind. One can assume that teachers' style, personality and the extent to which they made their subject interesting must have affected the preferences of pupils to a greater or lesser extent. But it is difficult to make a more accurate assessment of this influence. It takes us into the area of background or unseen influences, to which we shall return shortly.

(f) *How were the subjects decided?*

At this point we should return to the question which was raised earlier: how were the decisions about subjects actually made and how did the patterns in the subjects chosen and studied by the pupils emerge? It will be recalled that while the material sent out to parents gave the impression that, apart from certain formal limits on entry to certificate courses, the choice of subjects was open and free, an examination of the subjects actually studied in the third year revealed definite patterns. The type of subjects studied was closely related to the pupils' previous performance, and was related to some extent also to the pupils' sex. Thus the questions arose as to how these patterns emerged.

To attempt to answer the question we have discussed the part played and the influence exerted by various people involved in the course decision process. It may be useful to review the discussion so far.

Our interviews with the pupils made it clear that most of them were aware of an area of choice. The majority also maintained that in making their choices they had not been significantly influenced by others. Their choices were based largely on what they liked or were interested in, but many of them took account of job prospects, and made choices, or at least justified their choices, on the basis of their usefulness for future careers. In particular they denied the influence of friends, and in this their parents largely agreed with them. There is reason to believe that some pupils were more influenced by their friends than they admitted, or possibly realised, but it is hard to ascertain clearly the extent of this influence.

The evidence indicates, also, that most parents did not play a large part in the subject choice process. Only a minority could be classified a 'considerably involved', and these tended to be the middle-class parents. Many of the others felt unable to give any real advice to their

children, often because they did not understand present-day schools and education. The small part played by most parents, however, did not necessarily imply a lack of interest in their children's education. Most were very keen to talk about their children's schooling, and the majority attended the meetings for parents at the schools.

Turning to the schools and the teachers, it appears that the part played by most subject teachers was largely a background one. Obviously many teachers influenced pupils' ideas and choices to some extent by their day-to-day teaching in the classroom. When the time for decisions about subjects came, many of them spoke to their classes about their subject, and some were consulted by individual pupils. But most teachers indicated that few pupils approached them in this way. In two schools at least pupils were not encouraged to consult subject teachers, because of the danger of teachers "touting" or competing for the more able pupils, a practice which teachers in all the schools mentioned. The influence of subject teachers appeared to be exerted more through their general teaching, or through talks to their classes, than through advice or guidance given to individual pupils. In every school guidance teachers were involved to a greater or lesser extent in the course decision process, but in only three of the schools did they see each pupil individually to discuss subjects or courses. In the others it was left to the pupils to approach their guidance teachers or assistant head teachers if they wished advice. Once again, it seems that only a fairly small number of pupils did so. It appears also that when teachers did give advice to individual pupils it was largely a matter of referring to their marks or performance during their first and second years, and of stating in the light of this whether they would be advised, or, in some cases, whether they would be allowed to study the subject in their third year. While there is evidence that some teachers took account of career intentions (particularly with regard to ensuring that able pupils did not close doors into further or higher education courses), there was seldom any opportunity for the teacher and pupil to sit down and examine broadly and carefully the most appropriate course of subjects for the pupil to follow.

If it is true, then, that parents generally had little influence on decisions about subjects, and that there was little direct curricular guidance offered in the schools, how, in fact were decisions reached about the subjects to be studied, and how did the observed patterns in the subjects emerge? Certainly the fact that teachers, when consulted, based their advice on the pupils' performance would contribute to the relationships between past performance and the type of subject chosen. But since, as we have seen, in most of the schools few pupils were given advice in this way, the question remains to a large extent unanswered. An examination of the direct influences on pupils does

not appear to provide an adequate or complete explanation of the process.

Our failure to account for the patterns in the subjects studied by an examination of the formal procedures for choice and the direct influences on pupils' choices leads us to consider the possibility that background or unseen influences may have been operating. A number of recent writings about the schooling process have emphasised the significance of such unseen influences. Some have spoken of how pupils tend to 'internalise', or make subjectively their own, the expectations held about them in the school (Eggleston 1977, Davies 1976, Bourdieu 1974). Applying this approach to the situations we have been examining, we put forward now a theory as to how the process of subject choice took place within the schools. When we examine what was said by pupils, parents and teachers it is apparent that by the time when option forms had to be completed some fairly clear assumptions had come to be generally accepted by all concerned. It seems probable, in the light of other studies, that these assumptions were based largely on messages communicated by the schools during the schooling process so far. What we are suggesting is that it was these mutually accepted assumptions rather than any direct influences on the pupils, which produced the patterns we have observed in the subjects studied.

Three interrelated assumptions can be identified from the interviews with teachers, pupils and parents. The first had to do with the pupils' 'ability'. Long before they reached the subject choice stage at the end of second year pupils must have had a clear idea of their position in the order of things. This can be inferred from the way they spoke about themselves. Not infrequently, when asked for their ideas about their own future, they referred directly or indirectly to their ability level as something which was fixed and accepted. "I've no brains", or "I'm not brainy enough" was the rather pathetic explanation of their ideas offered by a number of pupils, while others took their high ability for granted*. This message had also been effectively communicated to parents, most of whom had accepted largely uncritically the schools' assessment of their children's ability. As we shall see, this assessment was of considerable importance for ideas held by both parents and children about the pupils' future. Frequently, when discussing the future, parents divulged that their child was "No' awfie bright", or "kind o' average", or said with some pride that "the school says he's quite clever". These perceptions were

* Other research has illustrated how children pick up messages about themselves. Eg. Nash found that, even at an early age and in mixed ability groupings, pupils understood what their own ability was, relative to that of other children in the class (Nash 1974). Thomas & Wetherell (1974) & Bellaby (1977) have also stressed the importance for career intentions of assumptions arising from pupils' performance.

clearly derived from the school and shared by the teachers. The interviews with teachers made it plain that level of ability was the leading concept in the teachers' perception of pupils. The schooling process so far had resulted in shared understandings about how bright or how dull the pupils were.

What appeared to happen was that this background understanding of their own ability was connected to two other interrelated assumptions which were communicated by the schools. One was an assumption about the nature of subjects. Some subjects were understood to be more appropriate for the 'able' pupils, and some for the 'less able'. Pupils could see this illustrated on the subject option sheets, where the subjects were usually arranged in a hierarchy. But this would only confirm what was said and communicated in informal ways by teachers. This assumption was, perhaps, less prevalent in the minds of parents, many of whom dd not understand very much about the subjects concerned. Teachers and pupils both took for granted, however, an understanding as to which subjects were appropriate for the 'able' pupils and which for the 'less able'.

This points to the further assumption that the main and most appropriate criterion by which decisions should be made about subjects was the record of the pupil's performance to date. Pupils knew that, by formal arrangement or by informal understanding, entry into various subjects was based on their performance during their first two years. If they were in any doubt about whether they should take a subject and consulted a teacher, he would normally refer to a marks sheet, or base his reply on the pupil's performance generally. We have seen that most parents naturally assumed that teachers' advice would be based on pupil's marks, and most teachers viewed things in the same way. The fact that pupils shared this assumption is illustrated by the remark of one boy in connection with advice given by teachers:

> "They don't *say* you're not capable, but that's what they *mean*."

Thus it was taken for granted by all concerned that a pupil's ability or performance would largely determine the kinds of subjects the school would recommend. Furthermore, parents' general advice was frequently based on the same assumption about the appropriate criterion for choice. "Pick the ones you're good at" was often the counsel which parents offered their children.

Now it will be apparent that these assumptions, about pupils having a certain level of ability, about the nature of subjects and the appropriateness of performance as a criterion of choice, are consistent with the pattern of choices made by the pupils. If it is true that pupils knew their own ability level, understood the characteristics of the various subjects and realised that their ability or

their performance were the most appropriate basis on which to make their choices, then it is to be expected that they would 'naturally' adopt the pattern of choice which we have observed: Band 1 pupils would choose mainly Order 1 subjects, while Band 3 would choose from the lower Orders of subjects. What we are suggesting, in other words, is that the pupils' choice of subjects happened as a result of the internalisation of the expectations of the school. This was, in fact, recognised and pointed out by a number of teachers. One of them put it clearly thus, in words we have already quoted:

> "With the majority it falls naturally as a result of the last two years. They discover for themselves the (subjects) at which they are most able. I don't find they come to ask. It's really just a question of what they would be doing anyway not whether they should do it."

Other teachers, as we have seen, spoke of how pupils "sort themselves out". The process of choosing subjects was thus "natural". By the end of their second year, most pupils had received the school's messages and had chosen in accordance with them, as a matter of course. "So", in the words of another teacher, "only a few kids need individual guidance".

This theory about a 'natural' self-sorting process is supported by the fact that the schools required to make few adjustments to the subjects chosen. Some changes were, of course, necessary because of the problem of making up classes of the right size and arranging time-tables, particularly in smaller schools. In addition to this, the responsible staff members in the schools did check to ensure that pupils had chosen subjects appropriate to their ability. A few Band 3 pupils who had chosen subjects of too high a level, and even fewer Band 1 pupils who had chosen subjects unsuited to their abilities had these subjects altered. But the number of such changes was very small. For by the time the choices were entered on the sheets the generally held assumptions, confirmed or articulated, where need be, by a teacher offering advice, had ensured that there were few pupils who had not, as a matter of course, settled for a combination of subjects which corresponded to the school's understandings of what was suitable for them.

There remains another question about kinds of subjects chosen by the pupils. We saw in Section b above that certain subjects were studied mainly by girls, and others mainly by boys. How did this come about?

There was little in the way of formal restrictions of entry to subjects to girls or boys. In Schools 6, 7 and 8 a few non-certificate subjects, (mainly home economics and technical subjects), were open only to girls or boys. A similar restriction applied to certificate courses in these subjects in School 6, but they have since been changed. But

apart from these instances, options were not formally limited on the basis of sex. All the headteachers made it clear that, with these exceptions, all subjects were in principle open to boys and girls. In two cases, however, Schools 2 and 8, it was pointed out that during the first and second years only girls had done home economics and only boys had done technical. This made it difficult to form mixed classes in third year, since this would have involved combining beginners with those who had done work of this kind for two years.

In spite of the official policy under which all subjects were open to pupils of both sexes, there is a little evidence that occasionally teachers discouraged pupils from doing a subject more appropriate to the other sex. One boy in School 2 reported that

> "Mr — told me to come up with another subject, because I had put down fashion and fabric and it's a girls' subject. I thought it had to do with drawing."

A girl in School 5 who had thought of choosing technical changed her mind

> "because it's for boys really — the maths teacher said so."

Similarly a girl in School 3 said she could not study technical because

> "Mr — said too many boys want it to let any girls in."

But such instances were few, and quite insufficient to allow us to conclude that direct encouragement or discouragement on the part of teachers led to some subjects being taken mainly by girls and others mainly by boys. There is, therefore, little evidence that this situation was brought about by either the formal policy of the schools or the direct actions of teachers. It is interesting, however, to note that those few parents who made definite recommendations to their children frequently suggested secretarial studies or home economics to girls and technical subjects to boys. This is in itself not sufficient to account for the pattern of subjects taken, but it is an indication of a general attitude or assumption which was widely held. In fact it would appear that the situation under discussion can be attributed again mainly to a general assumption on the part of all concerned about what is appropriate for boys and girls.* The fact that certain subjects have up to now been done by more members of one sex than of the other no doubt made it natural for pupils to adopt this assumption. This was reflected in the comments of one or two pupils who would have liked to do a subject traditionally associated with the other sex. One boy did not choose food and nutrition because "girls do it, not boys". A girl interested in technical gave up the idea because "not many girls are doing it". Clearly the idea that certain subjects are appropriate for girls and others for boys may be one that dies hard. It

* This point has been stressed also in the study of curricular differences for boys and girls in England, conducted by the DES. (DES 1975).

is, however, interesting to note that there were those who had crossed the traditional boundaries. Forty-seven boys in the first sample and fifty-eight in the second were doing home economics; while 13 and 20 girls in the two samples respectively were doing technical. Apparently traditional ideas were beginning to break down to some extent.

(g) *Is there freedom of choice?*

It will be useful to conclude our discussion of the course decision process by asking whether there was in fact genuine freedom of choice with the procedures implemented in the schools. If our argument in the previous section is accepted it will be clear that the choice of subjects was not made in an entirely free and unconstrained way. Pupils were constrained in their choosing by the generally accepted assumptions, communicated largely through the schooling process, about the appropriateness of different kinds of subjects for different pupils.

That is not to say, however, that pupils were not conscious of making choices. We saw in Section c above that most of them did feel that they themselves had chosen the subjects they intended to study. This is not inconsistent with the contention that they chose 'naturally' what was expected of them. Pupils had learned what kind of subjects were appropriate for them, and had chosen accordingly. But this does not mean they were not making choices. In most cases these choices were made without any direct constraint or compulsion and were experienced as the real choice of the pupil. Thus even where the choices can be seen to have arisen from mutually shared assumptions, most pupils were not denied the opportunity of subjectively making decisions themselves. The very effectiveness of the process by which the expectations of the school were internalised by the pupils meant that no matter how much the choices were in fact controlled by the messages given to pupils during the schooling process, pupils could still feel responsible for the choices they had made.

This, however, was not uniformly true of all pupils. For in addition to the constraints on choice arising from the accepted assumptions, there were also varying degrees of restriction on choice imposed informally or formally by the schools. What is significant here is that these restrictions were seen to apply more to Band 3 pupils than to the others. We have seen that in some of the schools there were formal restrictions on the kinds of subjects the academically less able pupils could select. In addition, there were frequently informal restrictions by which such pupils were not allowed to do certain subjects. In other words, in the case of the Band 3 pupils the accepted assumptions about appropriate subjects were frequently reinforced by rules or procedures by which some subjects were not available to them. That

such pupils had a smaller area of choice was acknowledged by the majority of the teachers interviewed in each school, and by 70 percent overall. In fact, the comments of a number of teachers on this question showed that they took the point for granted. Their views may refer partly to the formal limitations on the choices available to the less able pupils imposed before the choice process began. But teachers frequently pointed out that even where there were no such formal restrictions, these pupils often had to be persuaded to take certain subjects. A teacher in School 1 (where, as we have seen, almost all the pupils were given in their time-tables the subjects which they had formally 'chosen', see Table 3.11) spoke of how pressures were applied before the choices were made:

> "Some subjects have a dustbin quality . . . The lower ability groups are channelled into subjects like this — but it's done discreetly."

No matter how discreetly they were applied, such restrictions were frequently apparent to the pupils. Those in the second sample were asked their reasons for their various choices. Some of them indicated

TABLE 3.13

NUMBERS OF PUPILS DOING VARYING NUMBERS OF 'NO-REAL-CHOICE' SUBJECTS, BY BAND

2nd Sample only. All schools together

No. of 'No-real-choice' subjects

	0		*1*		*2*		*3 or more*		*Total in Band*
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	
Band 1	102	60	47	27	13	8	9	5	171
2	86	39	77	35	38	17	20	9	221
3	39	20	69	36	33	17	50*	26	191

* This includes 34 who were not given a choice of subjects. A total of 8 pupils whose subjects were unknown are omitted from the table.

that some of their subjects were 'chosen' only because they were "no good" at the others or because a teacher had said they should take it, or because in some other way there was no other possibility. Table 3.13 shows the number of pupils in the three Bands who reported varying numbers of such 'no-real choice' subjects. Only 20 percent of the Band 3 pupils had no subjects in this category, compared with 60 percent of the Band 1 pupils. This pattern was the same to a greater or

lesser extent in all the schools. This, of course, is not an objective indication of the amount of choice available to these pupils. But it does indicate that those in Band 3 were more conscious than the others that there were subjects which they could not take, and therefore that their choice was restricted.

It is obviously possible to view this situation in different ways. In some schools the view was expressed that pupils of this type were unable to make wise choices, and therefore it was appropriate that in one way or another choices should be made for them. Thus in School 6, where the non-certificate pupils were offered no choice, it was pointed out by way of justification, that when at the end of their third year these pupils were offered a limited amount of choice some of them had difficulty in choosing. Similarly, the headteacher of another school believed that part of the reason why more Band 3 pupils spoke of subjects they had not really chosen was that "abler pupils are more able to see a choice". The question of whether Band 3 pupils should be offered as much opportunity for choice as others raises the issue of the purpose and value of choice within the educational system. We will return to this and other issues about the less academic pupils in the last chapter. For the moment we are simply observing that in most schools there were more restrictions placed on Band 3 pupils than on others in choosing their subjects.

Finally, however, it must be acknowledged that the presence of constraints on choice arising from background assumptions or imposed restrictions did not mean that there was no area of genuinely free and open choice. In all the schools most pupils were able, objectively as well as subjectively, to choose between a certain number of subject options. In particular, where more than one subject from Orders 2 and 3 appeared in the same column there was frequently an opportunity for choice. It seems, from the evidence we have presented in Sections d and e of this chapter, that in so far as there were really open alternatives, within the assumptions about what is appropriate or expected, in most cases such choices were left very much to the individual pupil. Teachers sometimes advised about careers or post-school education, and some parents had views or preferences. But frequently the pupils made such choices themselves, influenced (as was shown in Section c) often simply by what they liked, in some cases by what their friends were doing, and frequently by their understanding of what was useful or important for jobs.

The main point which we wish to make about the course decision process, however, is that given the restrictions imposed in most schools on the subjects available to some pupils, and, more importantly, given the accepted and internalised assumptions about the appropriateness of subjects for different types of pupils, the area of genuinely open choice was in practice severely limited.

Summary

The procedures for subject choice were similar in all the schools, but in three of them all pupils were given a brief individual interview with a guidance teacher, and in the others this did not happen. In some but not all of them recommendations about subjects, courses or levels at which particular subjects could be studied were made by the schools. A study of the option forms and the subjects actually studied by the pupils in their third year showed that (a) the subjects could be arranged in a hierarchy of 'Orders'; (b) there was a clear association between the Bands representing the pupils' earlier performance and the Orders of the subjects they were studying; (c) the pattern of subjects studied by Band 3 (the less academic) pupils varied with the school; and (d) some subjects were studied mostly by boys and others mostly by girls. A comparison of the subjects studied and the subjects originally chosen showed that school authorities made few changes after the pupils' choices were made. Thus the important question is: how is it that pupils' choices fell into the observed patterns?

Most of the pupils claimed that they had chosen their subjects themselves. Frequently they had selected subjects because of their perceived usefulness for jobs, in a way that sometimes involved considerable rationalization. In quite a number of cases subjects were 'chosen' because pupils felt they had no real option. All but a few pupils denied the influence of friends, but this influence may have been greater than was admitted (or recognized).

All the schools sent option forms to parents and invited them to a meeting. But on the basis of their own accounts only 15 percent of parents could be classified as 'considerably involved' in helping their children with subject choice, and these were mostly middle-class parents. The majority of parents had little part in the process, gave little substantial advice, and apparently had little influence on choices. Most of them (even those who took no part in the choice of subjects) were keen to talk about their childrens' schooling, and the majority attended parents' meetings. But there was a widespread feeling that questions of education should be left to the schools and that parents should not push their children.

In all schools there was an opportunity for pupils to receive advice or guidance from teachers. Where there was no systematic arrangement for individual interviews it was open to pupils to consult guidance or subject teachers if they wished. It seems, however, that those who consulted teachers in this way were few. When teachers' advice was given, it was usually based on the pupils' marks or performance to date. There was little in the way of careful discussion with individuals about their needs, wishes or potential. Few pupils or parents thought that teachers exerted much influence on choices by their direct guidance. The guidance offered by teachers did not seem

to account for the pattern of subjects studied. Teachers must also have influenced pupils through their classroom teaching, and through the informal practice of competing for the 'better' pupils, but the extent of this influence is hard to assess.

The patterns in the subjects studied cannot apparently be attributed to the direct influence of parents or teachers. Thus it is important to examine possible background or indirect influences. Evidence from the interviews indicates that pupils, parents and teachers shared three assumptions: an assumption about the ability level of each pupil; an assumption about the nature of subjects and their appropriateness for different types of pupil; and an assumption about the appropriate criteria for choosing subjects. We suggest that such assumptions, shared by all concerned, are sufficient to account for the pattern of subjects which was earlier observed. On the whole choices were made not as the result of any direct influence. Rather, pupils chose 'naturally' within the expectations of the school because of these assumptions.

Although choices were constrained in this way, most pupils felt that they were making choices. In addition there was some scope for genuinely free choice, but this was limited. The scope for free choice was particularly limited in the case of the Band 3 pupils. In some cases this was justified on the grounds that they were less able to make choices.

CHAPTER 4

FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

We drew attention in Chapter 1 to the recent concern about school leavers, and about the opportunities open to them and the help or guidance they receive. Because of this concern a large number of studies have been made of the attitudes and expectations of young people before and after they leave school. Much less has been done, however, amongst children at an earlier age. In this study, therefore, we have attempted to investigate the views and intentions with regard to the future of the pupils in our samples when they were nearing the end of their second year. An important part of our intention in carrying out this investigation was to be able to relate the young people's early views to later developments. Discussion of that will have to await a later report. Meanwhile in this chapter we focus simply on what the young people at about the age of fourteen had to say concerning their future — about leaving school and entering work or further education. We consider the sources of these early ideas and discuss what weight should be given to their expectations at this stage. We also compare the expectations of pupils of different sexes, and of pupils in different schools and different areas.

(a) Leaving school

The first question which was raised with the pupils in connection with their future was whether they expected to leave school by the end of their fourth year, or to stay on after that. Their responses are shown in Table 4.1. It will be seen that the overall totals in each sample are very similar. A majority of all the pupils said that they expected to stay on, while only a third or less said they expected to leave. Thus the first point worthy of note is that at this stage of schooling the numbers expecting to stay on were high. In general only about a third of the pupils in Scottish schools in recent years have stayed on after their fourth year, and the overall position in our eight schools had not been very different. So we can reasonably assume that a fair number of pupils will have changed their minds by the time they reach their fourth year. But at this stage of schooling there was no widespread desire to leave school at the earliest opportunity. At

the end of second year the prospect not only of two, but of three more years at school was apparently quite acceptable to the majority of pupils.

TABLE 4.1

NUMBERS OF PUPILS EXPECTING TO CONTINUE AT SCHOOL AFTER 4th YEAR

	1st Sample							*2nd Sample*						
	Stay on		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*	*Stay on*		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*
School	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*
BOYS														
1	26	70	5	14	6	16	37	27	73	3	8	7	19	37
2	23	61	6	16	9	24	38	22	59	2	5	13	35	37
3	17	46	6	16	14	38	37	16	43	5	14	16	43	37
4	21	57	2	5	14	38	37	20	54	7	19	10	27	37
5	19	51	5	14	13	35	37	19	51	5	14	13	35	37
6	15	41	8	22	14	38	37	9	24	11	30	17	46	37
7	20	54	4	11	13	35	37	17	46	7	19	13	35	37
8	11	30	8	22	18	49	37	16	43	7	19	14	38	37
Total	152	51	44	15	101	34	297	146	49	47	16	103	35	296
GIRLS														
1	24	63	2	5	12	32	38	27	73	3	8	7	19	37
2	22	59	5	14	10	27	37	19	51	1	3	17	46	37
3	28	75	5	14	4	11	37	16	43	7	19	14	38	37
4	23	62	3	8	11	30	37	22	59	5	14	10	27	37
5	17	46	10	27	10	27	37	27	73	4	11	6	16	37
6	21	57	8	22	8	22	37	13	35	11	30	13	35	37
7	23	62	6	16	8	22	37	22	59	5	14	10	27	37
8	20	54	7	19	10	27	37	19	51	4	11	14	38	37
Total	178	60	46	15	73	25	297	165	56	40	14	91	31	296

Before we consider these figures in more detail, it is important to note that the overall pattern of school leaving intentions was closely related to the Bands of the pupils (Table 4.2). Thus, for example, the large majority of the academically more able pupils (82 percent of the boys and 88 percent of the girls), but only a small proportion of the less able (19 percent of the boys and 26 percent of the girls) thought they would stay on at school. Furthermore Table 4.3 shows that while

TABLE 4.2

PUPILS' SCHOOL LEAVING INTENTIONS BY BAND

Both Samples combined

	BOYS							*GIRLS*						
	Stay		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*	*Stay*		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Band 1	140	82	21	12	9	5	170	171	88	15	8	9	5	195
2	119	52	42	19	66	29	227	120	53	43	19	62	28	225
3	35	19	26	14	125	67	186	40	26	26	17	90	58	156
Total	294	50	89	15	200	34	583	331	57	84	15	161	28	576

pupils' intentions were associated with their fathers' occupational level,* the association between the pupils' Bands and their intentions about leaving school was found, amongst pupils from all kinds of backgrounds. The majority of Band 1 pupils whose fathers were manual workers expected to stay on at school, while more than half of the small number of Band 3 pupils whose fathers were professional or managerial workers expected to leave.

Returning to Table 4.1, it will be seen that there were differences in the expectations of pupils in different schools and of different sex. If the figures for the two samples are taken together, a significantly larger number of boys than of girls spoke of leaving. This tendency was particularly marked in the Borders schools. In the case of the boys the pattern of response found in the eight different schools was very much the same between the two samples. The expectation of staying on was significantly higher than average in Schools 1 and 2, and significantly lower than average in Schools 6 and 8. With the girls there was less consistency between the two samples, and if they are combined there is little difference between most of the schools. Here again, however, School 6 had a significantly small number expecting to stay on, while in School 1 the number was somewhat (but not quite significantly) higher than average.

A detailed breakdown of the responses from each school by the pupils' Bands (not included in the table) sheds more light on the differences between the schools. It seems that in School 1 the high level of expectation of staying on was due to the fact that an unusually high proportion (85 percent) of Band 2 pupils spoke of staying. In other words pupils of average performance had leaving

*For an explanation of the significance attached to father's occupational level, and its relation to the pupils' Bands, see page 24 above.

intentions similar to those of high performance. School 1 had (as we have seen) an unusually large proportion of middle class or white-collar families, and most of those in Band 2 who spoke of staying on came from such families. It seems that in this case, contrary to the general pattern, pupils' intentions followed their family background rather than their school performance. This may have been due, in part, to the tradition of the school. As was said earlier School 1 was originally a selective senior secondary with a strong academic tradition. Even after being made comprehensive it retained a high staying-on rate (43 percent in 1976-77 and 45 percent in 1977-78). It looks as if this tradition had influenced in particular the pupils of white-collar parents but of average performance towards the idea of staying on at school beyond the minimum age. In School 6 the proportion of Band 1 and Band 2 pupils expecting to stay on was significantly lower than elsewhere. Here it seems that the academically able and the average pupils were quite unsure whether they would be staying on or not. In this school the staying on rate had been consistently low over a period of years (averaging 25 percent over the previous three years). This is quite plausibly attributed locally to a lack of local opportunities in employment and post-school education for the more highly qualified school leavers. A further interesting detail is that in School 2 the proportion of boys in Band 3 who intended staying on was significantly larger than elsewhere, and there was a similar (though not statistically significant) tendency in School 4. It is possible that this was due to the old junior secondary tradition of these schools, leading to a continued emphasis on opportunities for the academically less able pupils.

The evidence thus suggests that the pupils' ideas at this stage about when they would leave school were influenced particularly by their performance in their class work up to that time, in some cases also by their family background and possibly also by the tradition of the school and the local community.

When those who were proposing to leave by the fourth year were asked their reasons for doing so, they tended to say that they wanted to get a job (mentioned by 38 percent of those who expected to leave early) or that they did not like school (mentioned by 30 percent). These two reasons often overlapped. But these declared reasons did not seem adequately to represent the attitude of these pupils on this issue.* Our enquiries showed that the pupils generally had a clear idea that those who stayed on and took Highers were likely to get

*It is one of the fallacies of some social research that it assumes that respondents have clear, conscious and logically consistent reasons for their attitudes, intentions or actions. Young people in particular frequently produce "reasons" to satisfy an interviewer when they have not in fact given the matter conscious and rational thought.

better jobs. The statement that they would leave in order to get a job was often an indication that they knew they would not achieve much in the way of qualifications, and so they might as well take the kind of employment available to them. Their declared reasons for what they intended to do appeared more as justifications of what they regarded as natural or appropriate for people like themselves. Understandably, the reasons offered by those who were proposing to stay on to a fifth year were often very general: they wanted to get a better job, to sit Highers, to learn more, etc. The only thing of interest to emerge from these responses was the idea in the minds of some pupils that they would stay on in order to re-sit O-grade examinations which they failed the first time.

It was apparent from the interviews, however, that the question of whether or not they would leave when they were sixteen was a rather unreal one for many of them. At that time most of them still had two years of compulsory schooling ahead of them, and had not given any serious consideration to the question. The majority of those whose performance at school had been below average were thinking of leaving, as this seemed a natural course for them. But amongst the others there was at this stage no widespread antipathy to school or to the idea of staying on beyond the minimum leaving age. In general, schooling was seen as a good thing, provided one had the ability to take advantage of it.

It is interesting to note that pupils' high level of expectation of staying on was not reflected in the views of their parents. Table 4.4 summarises the responses of parents about whether they expected their children to leave at sixteen or stay on at school. Comparison with Table 4.1 will show that in every school and with each sex a smaller proportion of parents than children expected that they would stay on, but also that the number of parents who were unsure was higher than was the case with the pupils. The parents' expectations were also closely connected with the childrens' school performance. A particularly large proportion (35 percent) of parents of pupils of average performance (Band 2) were uncertain about what their children would do: it depended largely on their performance at school during the next two years. The number of parents who expected their children to stay on when the children themselves were expecting to leave was very small (ten in the first sample, six in the second). The number who said they would prefer their children to stay on was also small — 61 or 11 percent in the first sample and 68 or 12 percent in the second.* And for many of these it was clearly something they *would have* preferred, although they accepted that it was not really to be expected. Thus it seems that few parents were

*The biggest single number of parents in this category in each sample was found in School 3 — 22% in the first sample, and 34% in the second.

aspiring for a higher level of school education for their children than the pupils themselves were hoping for at this stage. With less than a third of them saying they thought their children would stay on, the

TABLE 4.4

NUMBERS OF PARENTS EXPECTING THEIR CHILDREN TO CONTINUE AT SCHOOL AFTER 4th YEAR

	1st Sample							*2nd Sample*						
	Stay on		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*	*Stay on*		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*
School	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*
BOYS														
1	11	30	13	35	13	35	37	16	43	10	27	11	30	37
2	17	45	8	21	13	34	38	12	33	6	17	18	50	36
3	8	22	7	19	21	58	36	7	19	8	22	21	58	36
4	11	31	9	25	16	44	36	12	32	10	27	15	41	37
5	9	27	13	39	11	33	33	11	33	8	24	14	42	33
6	7	21	10	29	17	50	34	2	6	9	27	22	67	33
7	11	31	9	25	16	44	36	9	30	11	37	10	33	30
8	4	12	13	38	17	50	34	11	31	9	26	15	43	35
Total	78	27	82	29	124	44	284	80	29	71	26	126	45	277
GIRLS														
1	14	39	10	28	12	33	36	15	41	16	43	6	16	37
2	17	49	6	17	12	34	35	14	38	9	24	14	38	37
3	16	44	9	25	11	31	36	9	24	11	30	17	46	37
4	11	31	11	31	14	39	36	13	35	12	32	12	32	37
5	9	26	16	47	9	26	34	11	34	11	34	10	31	32
6	7	20	13	37	15	43	35	6	18	12	36	15	45	33
7	14	40	8	23	13	37	35	12	34	11	31	12	34	35
8	15	43	13	37	7	20	35	13	37	8	23	14	40	35
Total	103	37	86	30	93	33	282	93	33	90	32	100	35	283

overall level of expectation on the part of parents may be seen as fairly realistic. And in general the parents seemed content about this. There was little evidence at this stage of parents pushing their children towards higher levels of schooling.

(b) Job Intentions

When the pupils were asked if they had a job in mind which they intended to do when they had left school, the first thing of interest that emerged was that the large majority of them mentioned a job of

one kind or another. Only 47 (8 percent) of the first sample and 67 (11 percent) of the second sample said they did not know. The responses, classified according to socio-economic groups* are shown in Table 4.5. This gives a rough indication of the level of job intended by the pupils. It will be seen that the broad pattern was similar in the two samples. Taking both samples together, the number of boys who mentioned professional or managerial jobs was significantly higher than average in School 7, and significantly lower than average in Schools 6 and 8. Schools 1 and 2 also had large (but not quite statistically significant) numbers in this category. In every school a considerable number of boys hoped to go into skilled manual work, and the differences between schools and area in this respect were not significant. As one might expect the very large proportion of those boys who intended entering farming were to be found in the Borders schools. As far as the girls were concerned, there was little difference between the schools and the areas in the pattern of intentions.

The actual jobs mentioned by most of the pupils are listed in Table 4.6. Here it will be seen that over 80 percent of the boys mentioned one of 25 occupations, and almost 80 percent of the girls mentioned one of twelve occupations. Furthermore, if we put together the sample numbers from all eight schools, we find that in many cases the numbers mentioning particular occupations were remarkably similar from one year to the next. Some of the difference between the two samples in the responses of the girls arises from the fact that fewer girls were thinking of teaching. Shortly before the second sample interviews were carried out considerable publicity had been given to the fact that many newly trained teachers had not found employment, and it was clear that the idea of teaching was consequently less attractive to girls at school.† The most important question that arises in connection with these job intentions is: how significant are they and how seriously should they be viewed? Obviously it is not to be expected that the pupils concerned will all eventually enter these occupations when they leave school, or even that the intentions expressed at the end of their second year will remain unchanged over a period. Should they then be disregarded as insignificant, passing notions? Are they to be seen as fantasy-type ideas, with little relation to reality? Or should they be viewed as useful

*The socio-economic groups of the OPCS have been adapted to suit the data with which we were dealing, as follows: (our) category 1 = SEG 3 and 4; category 2 = SEG 1 and 2; category 3 = SEG 5; category 4 = SEG 6; category 5 = SEG 7; category 6 = SEG 9; category 7 = SEG 10 and 11; category 8 = SEG 13, 14, 15; category 9 = SEG 16; category 10 = SEG 17. Other SEG categories were omitted because they were not represented in the pupils' responses (OPCS 1970).

†The differences in the figures for nurses is partly accounted for by a certain confusion between nurse and children's nurse. Consequently the figures for these two should be read together.

TABLE 4.6

OCCUPATIONS MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED

BOYS	*1st Sample*	*2nd Sample*	*GIRLS*	*1st Sample*	*2nd Sample*
Farmer	8	6	Animal or outdoor work	7	7
Farm or animal worker	11	15	Secretary, typist	48	60
Electrician and electrical engineers	9	9	Police	12	12
Engineering trades	9	5	Cook	1	7
Motor mechanic	26	21	Nanny, children's nurse	7	20
Joiner	26	22	Hairdresser	12	21
Apprenticeship (unspec.)	2	6	Doctor	2	7
Painter	2	7	Nurse	63	37
Merchant navy	2	6	Teacher	30	22
Pilot	4	5	Artistic workers	8	5
Lorry Driver	7	5	Vets	7	12
Bank worker, accounting	8	7	Armed forces	14	5
Police	7	5	Total mentioning these occupations	211	216
Chef	9	5			
Sportsman	3	5	Percentage of total number mentioning a job	76%	80%
Doctor	6	4			
Teacher	8	1			
Scientist	2	5			
Artistic workers	—	5			
Chartered accountant	6	7			
Architect	11	7			
Lawyers	2	6			
Vets	6	5			
Draughtsmen	9	4			
Armed forces	36	39			
Total mentioning these occupations	219	212			
Percentage of total number mentioning a job	81%	82%			

indicators of a developing awareness of careers and possibilities that await them after school? Ever since Ginzberg and his colleagues developed a theory of occupational choice (Ginzberg 1951) it has been widely believed that in the early stages of thinking about careers

young people make 'fantasy' choices. Such choices are made without reference to reality. If the job intentions expressed by the pupils in our sample were fantasy choices of this type, then clearly it would be a mistake to attach much importance to them, since their ideas would presumably alter quite considerably as they took account of things in the real world. On the other hand, if they were related in some way to some aspects of reality, their intentions at this stage must not be totally disregarded, and the things on which they were based should be taken into account by those concerned with careers guidance. It is important, therefore, to try to discover to what extent and in which way the pupils' declared intentions were related to aspects of reality.

We may begin by considering how firm the pupils themselves considered their own intentions to be. The second sample members were asked about this directly. Of those who had mentioned a particular job, 42 percent said they were quite definite in their intentions, 41 percent said they were fairly sure, and 17 percent said it was only an idea which could easily change. These responses did not vary in any consistent way with the type of job they had in mind. A further indication of the extent of their own commitment to a particular idea at that time can be obtained by considering their replies to two other questions: what kind of job did they expect to be doing in about ten years' time; and what would they choose if they could have any job they wanted. From this it emerged that of those who mentioned a job at all, 70 percent (first sample) and 71 percent (second sample) expected to be in the same job as the one they had given as 'intended'. There was understandably some awareness that they might not achieve the jobs intended. For example, 21 percent of those who intended entering professional or other higher level occupations (ie, the first two categories in Table 4.5) did not fully expect to be in these occupations. Again eleven expected to be labourers, although that was not their stated intention. Generally speaking, however, the pattern of the expected jobs was not very different from that of the intended jobs. As for 'ideal' jobs 41 percent in each sample quoted an occupation different from their intended job. A few of the 'ideal' jobs mentioned (some 12 percent in the first sample and 5 percent in the second) could be classified as fantastic or improbable (Prime Minister, racing driver, model); but most of them were fairly ordinary jobs, 70 percent or more of them in each sample being professional, white-collar or skilled occupations. Moreover, the impression given by the young people was that the question about an ideal job was rather an unreal one for them. The result was either that they simply mentioned again the job they had quoted earlier as their 'intended' job, or thought of something else off the top of their heads. Generally speaking they did not seem to carry with them an

ideal or 'dream' job which was different from the one they had in mind as their intention. From all of this we conclude that all but a few of the pupils at this stage had some kind of intentions with regard to job, and that most of them regarded these intentions as fairly firm, though some had more than one possibility in mind. A few had a measure of doubt as to whether their intentions would be fulfilled, but in the majority of cases job expectation and job intentions were the same. In general they did not seem to harbour fantasies about other jobs alongside the jobs they had stated. In other words, most of the young people took their own job intentions at this stage fairly seriously.

This conclusion is supported by the fact noted earlier (Chapter 3 Section c) that many pupils attached importance to the career implications of subjects at the time when they were making their subject choices. While sometimes such career implications were thought of in general terms, not infrequently pupils appeared to assume that they would achieve the job they intended. Quite a few referred to "my job", as if it were all fixed and decided, while others, as we have seen, chose a group of subjects with a single job in mind. Moreover, all but 13 percent of the pupils (second sample) said they had discussed the question of their future job with their friends, and all but 12 percent had discussed it with their parents. Bearing in mind the fact referred to earlier that only a few said they did not know what job they intended, it seems plain that in general the pupils at this stage had given consideration to the question of future jobs, and took their own intentions fairly seriously. In their own view they were not fantasy choices.

It is possible, however, that while these intentions were taken seriously by the pupils themselves, they were nevertheless of a fantasy type because they were not derived from or connected with objective or external reality. To find out whether or not this was the case we must look, firstly, at the sources of their ideas about the jobs they would do. Did they derive their intentions purely from their own imaginations, or were they based upon some real-life experience? When they were asked directly about the sources of their ideas only a minority (19 percent of the boys and 39 percent of the girls) of those who had mentioned an intended job were unable to say where they had got the idea from (See Table 4.7). Frequently they said: "It was just my own idea", or "I've always wanted to do that". In some of these cases the job intentions may indeed have been derived simply from the imagination or fantasy of the pupils. But in others they may have forgotten or not fully realised where the idea first came from. It will be clear from the table, however, that most were able to give some real-life source for their ideas. Over a third (39 percent of the boys and 34 percent of the girls) said the source was some other person:

TABLE 4.3

PUPILS' SCHOOL LEAVING INTENTIONS BY FATHER'S OCCUPATION AND BAND

	Father in professional or managerial job							*Father in other non-manual job*							*Father in manual job*						
	Stay		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*	*Stay*		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*	*Stay*		*Unsure*		*Leave*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Band 1	120	96	3	2	2	2	125	77	93	3	4	3	4	83	91	72	25	20	11	9	127
2	62	71	9	10	16	18	87	66	55	24	20	29	24	119	98	49	40	20	64	32	202
3	7	39	1	6	10	56	18	10	19	13	24	31	57	54	49	23	30	14	135	63	214
Total	189	82	13	6	28	12	230	153	60	40	16	63	25	256	238	44	95	17	210	39	543

TABLE 4.5

TYPE OF JOB INTENDED

1st Sample

School	BOYS 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	GIRLS 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1. Professions and managers (exc. teachers and nurses)	11	7	4	4	4	3	9	3	45	4	3	3	4	3	3	6	1	27
2. Teachers and nurses	0	3	2	3	1	1	0	1	11	10	13	17	12	12	12	7	10	93
3. Intermediate non-manual	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	0	12	4	4	2	2	2	2	5	6	27
4. Junior non-manual	8	5	0	4	1	2	1	2	23	13	5	9	9	4	9	7	7	63
5. Personal service workers	1	1	1	0	2	1	4	0	10	3	4	2	5	4	2	4	3	27
6. Skilled manual	9	11	19	11	11	8	3	9	81	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
7. Semi-skilled	0	1	4	3	1	3	1	0	13	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
8. Farmers and farm or outdoor workers	1	1	0	0	3	6	5	9	25	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	6
9. Armed forces	4	3	3	9	6	7	7	6	45	1	4	1	5	8	5	1	1	26
10. Inadequately described	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	6
Don't know	2	4	2	1	6	3	4	6	28	1	3	1	0	3	3	4	4	19
Total	37	38	37	37	37	37	37	37	297	38	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	297

2nd Sample

School	*BOYS*									*GIRLS*								
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*Total*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*Total*
1. Professions and managers (exc. teachers and nurses)	6	10	3	4	6	1	10	1	41	2	4	3	3	4	2	3	5	26
2. Teachers and nurses	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9	2	8	5	13	6	7	7	57
3. Intermediate non-manual	3	3	5	2	4	1	1	2	21	3	6	1	2	2	1	5	1	21
4. Junior non-manual	6	0	0	6	3	2	1	2	20	12	12	12	14	5	9	8	6	78
5. Personal service workers	1	0	3	0	2	0	1	2	9	7	9	8	3	3	12	5	8	55
6. Skilled manual	10	15	15	11	15	12	10	6	94	0	1	0	;	0	2	0	1	5
7. Semi-skilled	1	1	3	1	0	2	1	1	10	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	1	8
8. Farmers and farm or outdoor workers	2	0	1	0	1	5	4	9	22	0	0	0	1	3	1	2	1	8
9. Armed forces	2	5	4	9	4	8	4	3	39	1	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	6
10. Inadequately described	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
Don't know	5	3	3	4	1	6	5	11	38	3	2	3	2	6	3	4	6	29
Total	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	296	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	296

TABLE 4.7

SOURCE OF IDEA OF INTENDED JOB *2nd Sample*

BOYS

School	*1* *Casual or practical experience*	*2* *School work*	*3* *TV, books, adverts*	*4* *Careers work*	*5* *Family suggested*	*6* *Others suggested*	*7* *Knew someone who does it*	*8* *Just own idea*	*9* *No job mentioned*	*10* *Total*
1	2	3	6	4	4	—	7	6	5	37
2	—	3	3	3	6	1	13	5	3	37
3	4	3	3	1	6	2	9	6	3	37
4	4	6	4	2	5	—	6	6	4	37
5	5	6	3	—	—	2	10	10	1	37
6	4	8	5	—	—	—	9	5	6	37
7	7	—	2	3	3	1	9	7	5	37
8	13	—	2	—	1	—	6	4	11	37
Total	39	29	28	13	25	6	69	49	38	296
Total as % of Cols. 1-8	15	11	11	5	10	2	27	19		

TABLE 4.7 — *continued*

GIRLS

School	1 Casual or practical experience	2 School work	3 TV, books, adverts	4 Careers work	5 Family suggested	6 Others suggested	7 Knew someone who does it	8 Just own idea	9 No job mentioned	10 Total
1	—	—	4	2	5	—	10	13	3	37
2	—	—	5	3	8	2	5	12	2	37
3	—	3	1	1	4	—	7	18	3	37
4	1	7	—	1	2	2	14	8	2	37
5	5	2	1	—	1	—	5	17	6	37
6	10	2	3	—	3	1	4	11	3	37
7	6	2	2	5	—	2	6	10	4	37
8	3	—	2	2	3	—	5	16	6	37
Total	25	16	18	14	26	7	56	105	29	296
Total as % of Cols. 1-8	9	6	7	5	10	3	21	39		

either they knew someone who did that job (the biggest single category) or the job had been suggested to them by a relative or friend:

"The people across the road — their son wanted to do (accountancy). When I heard them talking about it I thought it sounded good."

"There's a workshop near our home, and I've talked to the joiner there."

"My big sister worked in an office and she liked it."

"My Uncle Dick is a bus-driver and I've been on his bus."

A different question revealed that just over half of both the boys and girls who had an intended job did in fact know personally someone who did such a job, (although that may not have been the source of the idea for them) and over half of these had spoken to that person about the job. The table also shows that others, particularly amongst the boys, had thought of their intended job because they had already had some practical experience of it. Eleven of these intended going in for farming, and nine for motor mechanics:

"I help my father with the motor."

"I work on a farm in the summer holidays and I like it."

"I work with a gamekeeper on an estate at weekends setting snares."

In addition a few said they had got their idea from some aspect of their work at school. Many of these were hoping for professional or technical careers:

"A chemist — I like chemistry — it's one of my best subjects."

"A CA or auditor — I like maths and enjoy working with figures."

But this group also included five boys who were interested in joinery because of woodwork classes, and seven girls who said their interest in secretarial work arose from class work in school. The influence of television, books and advertisements was acknowledged most of all by boys who were thinking of entering the forces:

"A navy gunner — all the adverts on the telly got me going.";

and by girls interested in nursing.

The responses of the pupils make it clear that for most of them at least part of the source of their ideas about jobs was to be found in some area of real life which they had experienced. Some of those who were unable to mention a source had possibly generated their ideas purely by fantasy. But most of the pupils knew others who did the kind of work which they intended, or had had the idea suggested by

others, or had had some experience of that type of work or had discovered an interest or competence through their studies.*

However, the responses of many of the pupils to this question suggest that their job intentions were not derived from any one single source. Very frequently they spoke of how the idea had come to them in more than one way. An aspect of practical experience was linked with something someone said. Or a suggestion they had been given was reinforced by reading something in a book:

> (Joiner) "I talked to a neighbour about it and I read about it in the careers library."
>
> (Painter) "I helped my Dad in the house a couple of times, and he suggested it."
>
> (Mechanic) "My Dad knows about engines. I fixed an old broken lawnmower by myself. And I had read books about engines."
>
> (Secretary) "I enjoy typing. My aunt used to be a secretary and she enjoyed it."
>
> (Hotel management) "I'm good at economics and my mum suggested it."

Indeed the fact that so many of the young people mentioned more than one source for their ideas and the manner in which they spoke of their intentions prompts a particular interpretation of the way these early job intentions were formed. This is that typically they were formed by the coincidence of events, developments or circumstances in their experience with interests of their own, or ideas they had about themselves. Frequently the job done by someone they knew, or a suggestion made by a relative or friend, tied in with something they felt they were good at, or something which had caught their interest in some of their school work, or something they had seen in a book or on television. It seems that very often it was the coming together of two or more of these things which led the young people to think that that was the job for them. We will return to this point again shortly.

In the meantime a few words should be said about the extent to which careers work done in the schools seemed to provide the source

*We have not felt it useful in our analysis and discussion to use the categories 'tradition-directed', 'inner-directed' and 'other-directed' used by others in connection with young peoples' career preferences (Veness 1962, Maizels 1970). The term 'tradition-directed' refers to "situations in which family or neighbourhood traditions are such that no other choice is seriously considered" (Maizels 1970 p94). This did not appear to apply to any considerable number in our samples, with the possible exception of children of farming families. The other categories seem to overlap to such an extent that allocation to them would be very difficult. Very frequently the example or suggestion of an occupation provided by some other person ('other-directed') coincided with the individual's awareness of his own talents and interest ('inner-directed'). In fact it was often the coincidence of something in the outside world with something inner which resulted in the particular preference.

of ideas or intentions about jobs. It will be seen from Table 4.7 that only a few (five percent of both the boys and the girls) mentioned school careers work as the principle source of their ideas. Those who did so were thinking of a variety of different jobs: no one type of occupation predominated. Nearly all of them indicated that it was through seeing or reading something in the careers library that the idea they had in mind had emerged. None made reference to careers lessons or talks in class. It will be recalled that most of the schools had included some material on careers in their social education programmes prior to the subject choice period. In three schools, Nos. 1, 2 and 4, careers officers had spoken to classes at about this time. In School 6 the careers teacher visited all second year classes and told them, amongst other things, the kinds of jobs to which pupils leaving that school the previous year had gone. Nearly two-thirds of the first sample and nearly three-quarters of the second recalled that they had been given something on careers in their classes. Of these only 10 percent said this had influenced them in any specific way and a further 22 percent acknowledged some vague or general influence on their thinking. The rest (68 percent) did not acknowledge the influence of careers work in class on their ideas about jobs at all. And from what the pupils said in the interviews, it appears that none of this work supplied the source of their ideas about their intended job. This is not to say that the work done was of no value. Since it was done with particular reference to subject choice it no doubt assisted pupils to see the relevance of particular subjects to occupations. Nevertheless, it does not seem to have formed part of the constellation of circumstances and events out of which they drew their early job intentions. On the other hand the career libraries, though not featuring prominently in the pupils' replies, do seem to have been somewhat more significant as a source of ideas than the careers work done in the classroom at this stage.

So far we have been considering the relationship of the pupils' job intentions to reality by examining the source of their ideas, and we have reason to believe that their ideas owed more to aspects of their own experience than to fantasy. Another way of considering the relationship of their ideas to reality is to ask how the pattern of their intentions compared with the structure of jobs and opportunities in the locality. Were their intentions realistically related to the facts of the labour market in such a way that most of them could eventually be realised? Or were their ideas of such a kind that most of them were unlikely to be fulfilled within the existing structure of opportunities? An adequate answer to this question would depend on a detailed analysis of openings for young people in the labour market in each area, an aspect of the research project which has not been undertaken so far. But a more general answer can be provided by comparing the

stated intentions of the young people with the structure of local employment as revealed by the Census. The latest Census figures relate to 1971, and a few changes in the employment pattern will have occurred since then. Nevertheless, they provide a basis for a broad comparison.

Table 4.8 shows the distribution of the employed male population in the geographical areas which roughly correspond to the areas where our sample members lived, according to socio-economic groups (figures for females are not available). Alongside these has been placed the distribution of the job-intentions of the boys in our samples (taking both samples together) in the same groupings. From this it is obvious that the overall expectation of professional jobs was unrealistically high compared with the actual distribution of such jobs in the localities. Also those intending to enter semi-skilled or unskilled work were few compared with the Census figures. Managers, foremen and self-employed workers were almost unrepresented amongst the young people. A disproportionately large number spoke of the armed forces. This comparison applies, of course, only to the boys. But since the girls in our samples were similar to the boys in their level of aspiration, it is probable that their expectations also were unrealistically high.

A further point emerges from a more detailed comparison of the occupations proposed by the pupils with the actual pattern of employment in the locality as we know it both from the Census and from general knowledge. Such a comparison shows, for example, that although 21 percent of the females in the relevant areas of the Borders were classified by the Census as textile workers, none of the girls in either of our samples intended entering textiles. Similarly none of the boys in our samples spoke of the steel industry. Moreover, even in Lanarkshire, a heavily industrialised area, the number of pupils who at this stage were considering entering manufacturing industry was very small. While a substantial number of boys were hoping for apprenticeships, a reference to Table 4.6 will show that most of these were thinking of trades outwith manufacturing industry — joinery, motor mechanics, painting and (in some cases) electrical work. Similarly, among those boys who were intending to enter the more highly qualified occupations or professions there were very few who were thinking of industrial technology. A total of five in both samples mentioned civil engineering, but none spoke of other types of engineering at the professional or technologist level. Some were intending to become draughtsmen, but in some cases their interest was really in artistic rather than technical work. Those who intended becoming scientists mainly had academic or research work in mind. Industry, particularly manufacturing industry, did not feature at all

TABLE 4.8

LEVEL OF JOB INTENDED BY BOYS AND DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT MALE EMPLOYMENT IN SAME AREA ACCORDING TO 1971 CENSUS

Percentages

	Lanarkshire			*Borders*		
	1st Sample Boys	*2nd Sample Boys*	*Census Males*	*1st Sample Boys*	*2nd Sample Boys*	*Census Males*
Professional workers	16	17	4	15	14	3
Managers, etc.	2	—	7	—	—	12
Other non-manual	21	20	17	12	13	13
Foremen, self-employed	—	—	6	—	—	7
Skilled manual	35	38	37	24	34	29
Semi-skilled	8	7	12	9	7	14
Unskilled	1	1	14	—	—	8
Farming	1	2	1	18	15	13
Forces	13	15	1	20	15	1
Others	2	—	2	2	1	1
Total	99	100	100	100	99	100

prominently in the intentions of the boys. And even fewer of the girls intended entering industry. A total of thirteen girls in both samples expected they might eventually land up in "the mills" even though that was not their intention, otherwise none of the girls had industry within their sights.

From all of this we are bound to conclude that although the young people's job intentions may have had their source in some aspect of real life or experience, they were not realistically related to the structure of employment opportunities in their locality. The general level of aspiration was high and many of them were clearly going to require eventually to lower their expectations. And the distribution of the types of intended occupations appeared out of keeping with the occupational structure of the localities. Does this, then, mean that the young people at that stage had quite mistaken ideas about the occupational structure or the distribution of jobs in their locality?

During the interviews the first sample of pupils were asked what were the most common local jobs. From their responses it was clear that although more of them referred to industrial employment than to anything else, their ideas about industrial occupations were very vague. Most of them simply referred to "factories" or (in the Borders) "mills". A somewhat smaller number referred to non-industrial jobs, but the boys in particular tended to specify these jobs more clearly — joiners, drivers, postmen, dustmen etc — while the girls usually spoke simply of shops. Apparently the pupils as a whole were aware that a great many people worked in factories, but they did not seem to have very clear ideas what they did. Understandably they were much clearer about jobs they could see being done round about them. In the interviews with the second sample we made a more careful enquiry into the pupils' ideas about the distribution of various occupations. They were shown a list of jobs and asked to state whether they were very common, fairly common, not very common, or uncommon in their locality.* Their responses were compared with the actual distribution of occupations according to the 1971 Census. This comparison showed that the young people's perception of the situation was remarkably accurate with respect to all but two of the listed occupations. They believed there were more teachers and policemen than was actually the case! This confirmed the impression that the young people did have a reasonably good idea, in general terms, of the way occupations were distributed, but that there was

*Because of our experience in the open-ended enquiry the previous year, and in spite of the Sex Discrimination Act we prepared separate lists of jobs for boys and girls. The boys' list included: plumbers, chartered accountants, drivers, joiners, architects, policemen, teachers, electricians, clerks and bank workers, social workers, factory labourers and chefs. The girls' list included: shop assistants, nurses, cooks, policewomen, social workers, waitresses, teachers, typists and secretaries, physiotherapists, machine operaters, hairdressers and vets.

some tendency to be more aware of the more visible occupations, or at least to be able to refer to them more specifically.

What this means is that the lack of fit between the pattern of the pupils' intentions and the distribution of local occupations was not due to a total misapprehension on the part of the pupils about the local employment structure. It seems to be the case, rather, that they formulated their intentions with little or no reference to this actual employment or opportunity structure. As we saw earlier they frequently derived their ideas from some aspect of real life or experience, but the evidence suggests that at this stage they had not related them to the actual distribution of jobs in the locality. In other words, they do not seem to have asked themselves or others whether or not there were likely to be many openings into their intended

TABLE 4.9

PUPILS' JOB INTENTIONS BY BAND

Both Samples combined

	BOYS							*GIRLS*						
Intended job	*Professions or managers*		*Other non-manual*		*Manual*		*Total*	*Professions or managers*		*Other non-manual*		*Manual*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Band 1	63	56	30	27	19	17	112	93	59	55	35	9	6	157
2	31	20	34	22	87	57	152	77	41	81	43	32	17	190
3	2	2	11	9	107	89	120	28	22	44	35	55	43	127
	96	25	75	20	213	55	384	198	42	180	38	96	20	474

occupation. They were, indeed, aware of the fact that because of widespread unemployment and the level of qualification required for some jobs it might be difficult to get into their intended occupation. But that was a general awareness. It was not related to an assessment of the actual structure of opportunities with relation to particular kinds of jobs.

This brings us to a further question about the relation of the pupils' intentions to reality. If their aspirations were on the whole unrealistically high, does that mean that the young people at this stage were selecting occupations without reference to their ability? An answer to this can be given by relating their occupational intentions to their school performance as shown by their Band. This is done in Table 4.9. For simplicity's sake, the intended jobs have been grouped into three types: professional and managerial (comprising categories 1 and 2 of Table 4.5), other non-manual

TABLE 4.10

PUPILS' JOB INTENTIONS BY FATHER'S OCCUPATION AND BAND

Both Samples combined

Father's occupation:	Professional or managerial							Other non-manual							Manual						
Intended job	*Professions or managers*		*Other non-manual*		*Manual*		*Total*	*Professions or managers*		*Other non-manual*		*Manual*		*Total*	*Professions or managers*		*Other non-manual*		*Manual*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Band 1	70	72	20	21	7	7	97	33	54	24	39	4	7	61	43	46	37	39	14	15	94
2	33	47	23	33	14	20	70	22	25	34	38	33	37	89	43	27	52	33	62	39	157
3	2	15	4	31	7	54	13	3	8	11	30	23	62	37	20	12	34	21	109	67	163
	105	58	47	26	28	16	180	58	31	69	37	60	32	187	106	26	123	30	185	45	414

(categories 3 and 4) and manual (categories 5, 6 and 7; for the purposes of this table categories 8 - farmers etc. - and 9 - armed forces - have been excluded). It is immediately obvious that the broad type or level of employment intended was very closely related to the Band of the pupils, especially in the case of the boys.* Moreover, this relationship was maintained to a greater or lesser extent whatever the occupational level of the pupils' fathers. It will be seen from Table 4.10 that the majority of children of professional or managerial fathers who fell into Band 3 intended entering manual occupations, while most of the children of manual working fathers who were in Band 1 were thinking of non-manual, particularly professional work. We deduce from this that although the overall level of aspirations may have been unrealistically high in comparison with the realities of the labour market, this level of aspiration was not unfounded or based only on fantasy. Apparently they had pitched their level of aspirations, consciously or otherwise, according to their ability as this had been shown by the school.

These various points about the intentions and aspirations of the pupils can form the basis of a theory about the nature and development of the intentions of young people at this stage. But first a few words should be said about the views of parents and the part they appeared to play in the formation of these intentions. All the parents were asked what they thought their children would do when they left school. Understandably a certain proportion of them (11 percent of the first sample and 21 percent of the second) said they did not know, while others mentioned more than one possibility (15 percent and 19 percent), or spoke of a broad line or field without being sure what the actual job would be (10 percent and 11 percent). Only a fairly small proportion of parents (18 percent of the first sample and 11 percent of the second) named an occupation they expected their child to enter which was different from what the child intended. The rest of the parents (46 percent and 38 percent respectively) mentioned the same job as the children had done. These figures support the general impression received from conversation with the parents, namely, that although they tended to be more open-minded or unsure than their children were about what they would eventually do, few of them had ideas different from those which the pupils themselves had. Where the parents' expectations were different from those of their children, in some cases these were higher and in others lower. Of the 102 first sample parents who mentioned an occupation different from the one intended by their child, 47 mentioned one which was lower according to the socio-economic

*Of the 28 Band 3 girls included under 'professional and managerial' 23 intended entering nursing, and 3 teaching — occupations which we have classified as professional but which the OPCS includes under 'intermediate non-manual'.

grouping, and 37 mentioned one which was higher. With the second sample parents a more deliberate attempt was made to find out whether they would prefer their children to be aiming higher than they were. Only in 35 cases (six percent of the total) did they acknowledge that this was the case. Thirty of these were Lanarkshire, distributed evenly amongst the four schools. It may be that parents in Lanarkshire were more conscious of a competitive society than their counterparts in the Borders. But even in Lanarkshire the number of parents who would prefer their children to aspire higher was small.

The majority of the parents (63 percent of the first sample and 69 percent of the second) said they had discussed future jobs with their children. All but a very few of the pupils also said they had some discussion with their parents about this. When asked about these discussions in more detail, 25 percent of the second sample parents said they had made some suggestions to their children, but only three percent said they had suggested the job which their child was now intending to do.* Most of those who had discussed the topic had made comments of a general kind or given encouragement without making specific suggestions. There was no clear evidence at this stage of parents urging their sons to get apprenticeships as has been reported amongst young people at a later stage in Scotland (Weir & Nolan 1977, Ryrie & Weir 1978). In keeping with what was said above about their preferences, a very few parents (less than 5 percent) said they had encouraged their children to aim higher.

The general picture which emerges from the interviews with parents is that most of them were prepared to accept their children's ideas about their future. Most had had some discussion about it, and a few had made suggestions. A number were unsure whether the children's intentions would be achieved, but many of them took these intentions at this stage quite seriously. Only a very few were encouraging their children to aim higher. Running through what the parents said generally was the sense that they wished to support and encourage their children in whatever they saw fit to do. They wanted them to be happy, and did not want to impose their wishes or ideas on them. "So long as he's happy, that's the main thing", was a comment made very frequently. As was said earlier in connection with subject choice, there was a widespread belief that it is wrong for parents to push their children.

There was, therefore, little to suggest that parents had exerted very much direct influence on the pupils' job intentions at this stage. It is interesting to note also that few pupils were thinking of following in

*Nineteen children also said their parents had suggested their intended job, but only three of these were amongst the 18 whose parents claimed to have made the suggestion! Apparently there was some difference either of memory, or of perception as to what constituted a 'suggestion'.

their parents' footsteps. The idea that at an early stage young people tend to want to do so was frequently expressed by teachers and others. But this does not seem to be borne out by what the pupils said to us. Those whose intended job was the same as that of either parent numbered 34 boys (11 percent) and 15 girls (five percent) in the first sample; and 31 boys (10 percent) and 19 girls (six percent) in the second. Amongst these boys the biggest single group were those who intended following their fathers into farming. These amounted to 17 in the two samples, and represented more than a third of all the boys who were proposing entering farming. A further 14 boys intended following their fathers into skilled trades. Practically none of the sons of professional fathers or mothers spoke of entering the same profession — one teacher and one architect. Amongst the girls, nurses (12) secretaries (7) and teachers (4) accounted for most of them. This is further evidence of the lack of direct influence by the parents on the children's job intentions at this stage. There can be little doubt that the indirect influence of the home was often great. What was said earlier about the sources of the pupils' ideas showed that by providing opportunities for informal conversation about work, experience of certain aspects of life and the chance to meet relatives and neighbours, the home and family often provided a powerful source of influence and ideas. But this influence seldom took the form of direct suggestion or pressure towards a particular occupation, or of a parental example which the young person wished to follow.

We return to the question of how the pupils did arrive at their job intentions at this stage, and how those intentions should be viewed. The evidence presented here suggests that typically their ideas were reached through the coincidence or the bringing together of a variety of things to do with their experience and their self-understanding. Generally speaking their ideas seem to have come to them from things in their own experience. They had tried their hand at something and found they liked it or were good at it. They knew someone who did a particular kind of job and perhaps they had heard that person speaking about his or her work. A member of their family made a suggestion about a possible occupation. They had seen something in a book or on television. Something in their studies or practical work at school had caught their interest. Frequently more than one of these things happened, so that their attention became focussed on one or possibly more than one occupation. Along with this they had been given a fairly clear idea of their own abilities, through the schooling process. So from the variety of their experience they selected, not just anything that took their fancy, but something which was in keeping with what they understood to be their ability. Their intentions, therefore, emerged through a process

of bringing together aspects of their experience and their perceptions of their ability. In other words, these young people at this stage do not seem to have derived their ideas from fantasy, but by a process which had taken account of reality in different ways. True, the process had not as yet taken account of other aspects of reality: the actual distribution of jobs likely to be available to them, and in particular the number of professional jobs available. Again, while their intentions were related to their ability as they understood it at this stage, we can speculate that some of them would probably have to revise their understanding of their ability as they went on through school. Because of this, and because people are open to changing their minds and feelings, it would obviously be a mistake to assume that their intentions as expressed at this stage would be fulfilled when they leave school. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that for many of these young people their intentions at this stage were meaningful and important to themselves, and had been arrived at by a process which was related to reality.

If this is true, then it has implications for careers education and guidance. The job intentions of young people at this stage should neither be dismissed as fanciful, unrealistic and irrelevant, nor treated as if they were definite decisions (and both of these are sometimes done) but should be accepted, understood and given attention as important elements in the child's vocational and general development, and used as a basis to assist that development further. This is a point we will return to in the final chapter.

(c) Continuing education after school

The final aspect of the pupils' intentions for the future has to do with whether or not they expected to go on to full-time further or higher education after they had finished school. Straightforward questions about this in the interviews led to responses which are summarised in Table 4.11. Certain points stand out. A few more boys than girls were hoping to go to university, but considerably more girls than boys were thinking of college. Certain schools had larger numbers than others of pupils who intended entering tertiary education: Schools 1, 2 and 7 tended to have large numbers, particularly amongst the boys. If both samples are put together, the numbers expecting some form of tertiary education were significantly larger in the Lanarkshire schools taken together than in the Borders schools. Specially noticeable was the fact that in the Borders only 83 boys out of both samples (28 percent) were thinking of continuing full-time study after school, and 31 of these were in School 7. In School 6 there were only 13 and in School 8, 14. Schools 1 and 2 had particularly large numbers of pupils hoping to go to university, and there were particularly few in Schools 3 and 6.

TABLE 4.11

NUMBERS OF PUPILS HOPING TO GO ON TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

1st Sample

	BOYS				*GIRLS*			
School	*University*	*College*	*Possibly dk*	*No*	*University*	*College*	*Possibly dk*	*No*
1	11	15	5	6	10	11	4	13
2	10	9	3	16	9	20	3	5
3	4	10	12	11	4	15	10	8
4	9	5	5	18	6	8	6	17
5	6	8	10	13	4	8	11	14
6	4	4	17	12	6	15	6	10
7	[illegible]	8	8	13	6	14	9	8
8	3	3	14	17	6	8	12	10
Total	54	62	74	106	51	99	61	85
Percentage of total	18	21	25	36	17	33	21	29

2nd Sample

	BOYS				*GIRLS*			
School	*University*	*College*	*Possibly dk**	*No*	*University*	*College*	*Possibly dk**	*No*
1	11	4	20	2	3	23	10	1
2	9	11	12	5	6	20	10	1
3	3	8	14	12	3	12	16	6
4	7	9	12	9	6	11	16	4
5	6	5	18	8	4	12	15	6
6	2	3	21	11	3	8	22	4
7	9	7	10	11	4	17	9	7
8	2	6	18	11	6	9	12	10
Total	49	53	125	69	35	112	110	39
Percentage of total	17	18	42	23	12	38	37	13

* Because of a change in the form of the question put to the 2nd Sample a greater number than in the previous year indicated that they did not rule out the possibility of going to tertiary education, although they were not actively expecting it. All of these are included under 'possibly' in the 2nd Sample table.

As one might expect the expectation of going on to full-time study after finishing school was significantly related both to the pupils' Band and to their fathers' occupational level (Table 4.12). Those who were hoping to go to university were very largely in Band 1, regardless of their fathers' occupation. Similarly, a significantly large number of those who spoke of going to college were in Band 2. In addition a considerable number were unsure, including over a quarter (27 percent) of the Band 1 pupils.

The way in which the pupils responded to questions about further education made it clear that many of them had only a very hazy idea about it. Certainly most of them knew of the existence of "technical colleges", or "tech's". In each sample just over a half could name or refer to one local college, and a further quarter or more referred to more than one local college. A few knew only of colleges in the cities, but only 15 percent could not tell the interviewer about any college. Just over half of each sample knew or knew of someone who had studied at a college in one way or another. But it was plain that knowledge about colleges depended to quite a large extent on where the colleges were in relation to the school or the town. School 3 is very close to a technical college and virtually all the pupils knew about it, but few knew of any other. School 4 is located in a very self-contained housing area, and over a quarter did not seem to know of any college, although there is one in their town. In the town in which School 7 is located there is no college, but the proximity to the city meant that many pupils had heard of city colleges, but few had heard of the Regional ones. In other words, what knowledge the pupils had at this stage about colleges which they could attend locally seemed to have reached them through the community rather than through information given them by the schools. Only some three percent of the total in each sample said that teachers had spoken to them about college and these were spread across all the schools. In fact, although most of the pupils knew of the existence of local colleges, few had any clear idea about what a college is, and who goes there. Even among those who said they hoped to go to college many were somewhat vague about it. It is true that a certain number of girls did clearly understand that going to college was a necessary or possible route into the job they hoped for: 28 intended going to colleges of education to become teachers, and 22 hoped to go to further education colleges for hairdressing, 22 for nursery nursing, and 60 for secretarial work. Most of those who were hoping to go to university also had fairly clear and firm intentions, and we shall return to them shortly. But for most pupils university seemed beyond them and college seemed to be something rather vague to which people who were bright, but not bright enough for university, could

TABLE 4.12

PUPILS' EXPECTATIONS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION BY BAND AND FATHER'S OCCUPATION

Both samples combined

	Father professional or managerial									*Father in other non-manual job*									*Father in manual job*								
	Univ.		*Coll.*		*Unsure*		*No*		*Total*	*Univ.*		*Coll.*		*Unsure*		*No*		*Total*	*Univ.*		*Coll.*		*Unsure*		*No*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Band 1	61	49	29	23	30	24	5	4	125	30	37	25	30	18	22	9	11	82	38	30	34	27	41	32	14	11	127
2	20	23	31	36	26	30	10	11	87	7	6	37	31	41	34	34	29	119	13	6	32	16	65	32	61	30	203
3	1	6	4	22	5	28	8	44	18	2	4	9	17	19	36	23	43	53	8	4	49	23	66	31	91	43	214
Total	82	36	64	28	61	27	23	10	230	39	15	71	28	78	31	66	26	254	59	11	147	27	172	32	166	31	544

go. Some pupils thought of college simply as a rather easier place than a university:

"Yes, I'd like to go to college – university would be too hard."

"I'd like to go to college — it's not as much work as university."

"I prefer college — university would be harder."

Frequently their views about going or not going to college were based on their notions of whether or not they would like the life:

"I think I would enjoy it. It'd be different from school. They treat you different — more grown up. It'd be good fun."

"I'd love to go — the atmosphere — everybody working together — it'd be smashing."

"They say it's a great life, and you meet lots of people and you do stupid things, and that's me!"

"I never want to — it sounds boring."

"I don't think I'd like it. It'd be like school over again."

This last comment was echoed by many pupils, and constitutes one of the main reasons for not intending to go to full-time further education. It sounded too much like a continuation of school. Other reasons quite frequently expressed were that they preferred to get a job and start earning money, and that they did not have the ability. This last point was usually expressed in terms of "being brainy" or "having brains":

"You've got to be really brainy to get into these places."

"I thought you had to have brains or something before you could go."

"I wouldn't like it — I haven't got the brains."

In addition, a certain number of pupils in the Borders schools referred to the fact that going to college or university would involve staying away from home, and they did not like that prospect. But for the most part the reasons why they were thinking of going or not going to full-time further education were based not on any ideas about the relevance of such education to their future but on general ideas about whether they were "brainy" enough, or whether they would like it. Few had any clear idea of what further education was, or had thought seriously about courses. In the circumstances it was not meaningful to make more detailed enquiry into their awareness of further education opportunities at this stage.

As was said earlier, the groups of pupils who hoped to go to university were somewhat different. These were mostly academically able pupils (72 percent overall were in Band 1 and 22 percent in Band 2). Of the 201 pupils in this group all but 24 knew what kind of job

TABLE 4.13

PUPILS' INTENTIONS CONCERNING TERTIARY EDUCATION BY WHETHER ANYONE HAD SPOKEN TO THEM ABOUT IT

	1st Sample									*2nd Sample*								
	Discussion of TE by									*Discussion of TE by*								
	Parents		*Teachers*		*Others*		*No one*		*Total*	*Parents*		*Teachers*		*Others*		*No one*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Intends University	67	64	7	7	5	5	26	25	105	43	51	15	18	7	8	19	23	84
Intends College	61	38	11	7	7	4	82	51	161	54	33	18	11	8	5	85	52	165
All others	57	18	13	4	12	4	243	75	325	49	14	14	4	11	3	269	78	343
Total	185	31	31	5	24	4	351	59	591	146	25	47	8	26	4	373	63	592

they wanted. The jobs they were thinking of were mostly ones for which a university education was appropriate, nearly three quarters of them being professional, scientific or higher administrative occupations. There were a few whose thinking on the matter was apparently not very clear, since they were proposing entering skilled trades or other occupations for which a university qualification was unnecessary. But for the most part the pupils who hoped to go to university seemed to know what they were about.

It seems clear also that those who were thinking of going on to full-time tertiary education in any form and particularly those who were hoping to go to university were more conscious of the influence of parents than of teachers. Table 4.13 shows that seven percent (first sample) and eighteen percent (second sample) of those who hoped to go to university, and seven and eleven percent respectively of those thinking of college said that teachers had spoken to them about tertiary education in one form or another. Overall, the number of pupils in the samples as a whole who said that teachers have suggested tertiary education to them was very small: 31 in the first sample, and 47 in the second (five and eight percent respectively). This cannot be taken to mean that nothing had been said to the other pupils about further or higher education. We know, for example, that in most of the schools pupils were given information about entry requirements for university and college courses, at the time of subject choice. What it does mean is that few pupils at this stage were conscious of having received any personal advice or suggestions about tertiary education from their teachers. On the other hand, the majority of those who were thinking of university, and over a third of those who were thinking of college said their parents had spoken to them about continuing education beyond school.

The significance of parents in this connection is further revealed by the responses of the parents themselves. Table 4.14 when compared with Table 4.11 shows that the general level of expectation of tertiary education for the pupils was somewhat lower amongst the parents than amongst the pupils themselves. The general pattern was, however, the same. The numbers varied with the school, the sex and the Band of the pupil, and the father's occupational level in very much the same way as they did the pupils' own responses. Those who expected their children to go on to tertiary education were mostly parents of pupils in the higher Bands, and were also mostly in families where the father was a professional or white-collar worker. The most significant point, however, is that the overwhelming majority (80 percent first sample, 93 percent second sample) of pupils whose parents said they expected they would go on to tertiary education themselves said they hoped to do so. In other words, where the parents were expecting tertiary education, in most cases the pupils

TABLE 4.14

PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN

	1st Sample											*2nd Sample*										
	Univ.		*Coll.*		*Either*		*Possibly*		*No*		*Total*	*Univ.*		*Coll.*		*Either*		*Possibly*		*No*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
School 1	7	10	11	15	16	22	24	33	15	21	73	7	9	14	19	10	14	15	20	28	38	74
2	16	22	11	15	9	12	24	33	13	18	73	8	11	11	15	10	14	11	15	33	45	73
3	8	11	14	19	5	7	19	26	26	36	72	7	10	13	18	3	4	13	18	37	51	73
4	11	15	6	8	7	10	18	25	31	42	73	7	9	7	9	0	0	18	24	42	57	74
5	6	9	11	17	7	11	23	35	18	28	65	4	6	9	14	8	13	17	27	26	41	64
6	9	13	8	12	1	2	24	35	26	38	68	3	5	7	11	3	5	17	26	36	55	66
7	13	19	15	21	6	9	14	20	22	31	70	5	8	16	25	8	13	13	20	22	34	64
8	6	9	7	10	5	8	25	37	24	36	67	7	10	9	13	4	6	15	21	35	50	70
Total	76	14	83	15	56	10	171	31	175	31	561	48	9	86	15	46	8	119	21	259	46	558

were also. Furthermore, in the vast majority of these cases the parents said they had discussed the matter with their children. And the extent of such discussion as reported by the parents was also closely related to the intentions of the pupils (Table 4.15). This does not necessarily

TABLE 4.15

PUPILS' EXPECTATIONS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION BY WHETHER PARENTS REPORTED DISCUSSION

2nd Sample

	Discussed by parents		*Vague mention by parents*		*Not discussed*		*Total*
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Pupil intended University	60	74	7	9	14	17	81
Pupil intended College	70	45	15	10	71	46	156
Others	81	26	22	7	212	67	315

mean, of course, that it was the parents' influence which caused the young people to think in terms of going to college or university. But the evidence both from the parents and the pupils suggests that parents had played a more direct part in the formation of the children's intentions at this stage than the teachers did.

These points about the intentions of the pupils with regard to post-school education can be summed-up thus. More girls than boys were thinking of going to college, but in general ideas about college were vague, and frequently not connected with other aspects of their intentions. A greater number in Lanarkshire than in the Borders were thinking in terms of some form of post-school education. A few more boys than girls were intending to go to university, and this group seemed to be far more clear and firm than others in their intentions. Most of those who were thinking of continuing full-time education were among the academically more able pupils. Their intentions seem to have been formed partly as a result of their performance at school, and partly, in the case of the university group in particular, as a result of discussions held in the home. Teachers generally seemed to have had little direct influence on the pupils' ideas at this stage. This, together with the uncertainty in the minds of many pupils about colleges and college courses, raises the question of whether more should be done in the schools to inform and guide the thinking of individual pupils at this stage about their future education. This is a

question to which we will return in the final chapter when we discuss guidance.

Summary

This chapter deals with the future intentions of the young people at an early stage. A majority of all the pupils said they expected to stay on at school after their fourth year. This proportion is high compared with actual staying on rates in these and other schools in recent years. The level of expectation of staying on was closely related to pupils' Bands, and it appeared also to vary with the actual staying on rate in the school during the previous few years. The question of when they would leave however seemed a rather unreal one for many pupils at this stage. Fewer parents than children thought the pupils would stay on, and in general parents were not pressing their children to do so.

The large majority of pupils quoted a job which they intended to do when they left school, but it is difficult to know what weight to attach to these intentions. Most of them took their own intentions fairly seriously, and few appeared to harbour fantasies about ideal jobs. Most of them had derived the idea of their intended job from something in real life: they knew others who did that type of work, or had had some practical experience of it, or had discovered an interest through their studies. None of them, however, indicated that they had got the idea as a result of careers work done in their classes, although a few mentioned careers libraries. Comparison of the distribution of the intended jobs with that of the existing occupations in the locality suggests that the intentions were not realistically related to local opportunities. The level of the intended jobs was, however, closely related to the pupils' Bands. Most parents had had some discussion with their children about their intended occupation, but in the main they supported the young people's own intentions, and few wished them to aim higher. Only a small minority of the pupils proposed following their parents' footsteps. In general it seemed that the pupils' intentions were derived from sources in real life, and were related to their school performance, but took little account at this stage of opportunities. We suggest that typically their ideas arose as the result of the coincidence of a variety of things to do with their experience and their self-understanding, and that these ideas should not be dismissed as fanciful, nor treated as firm or permanent choices, but used as a basis for guidance.

Responses to questions about whether or not they intended going on to full-time education after school showed that many pupils had very hazy ideas on this topic. Most knew of the existence of colleges, but few had any clear idea about what further education was, or had thought seriously about courses. Their thinking about college was not based on the relevance of college courses to their future, but on

ideas of how 'brainy' they were or of whether they would like it. The pupils who were thinking of university, however, had clearer ideas. Most of them were Band 1 pupils and more than half of them said their parents had spoken to them about university. Very few pupils indicated that teachers had suggested some form of tertiary education to them. In general most pupils had little clear idea about post-school education, which suggests that more could be done to give basic information about this by the second year stage.

CHAPTER 5

PUPILS, PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL

In this final chapter we do not attempt to summarise all the various points which have been made in the previous ones since summaries of our findings have been included at the end of Chapters 3 and 4. Instead we take up a number of issues which seem to emerge from the material already presented, and to merit further discussion. These are: the significance of the schools' assessment of pupils' ability, the uncertainty about the curriculum for the academically less able pupils, the significance of choice within the curriculum, the relationships between parents and school at this stage in the schooling process and the need for individual guidance and personal relationships with pupils. A discussion of these topics should serve to bring together the various strands of thought or argument developed in the earlier chapters.

Academic ability and the sorting process

Our study has made it clear that the most significant factor affecting both the decisions which were reached about subjects to be studied and the intentions and aspirations of the pupils at that stage, was their 'ability'. Pupils and the parents had been given a fairly clear understanding, through the schooling system, of what their level of ability was. The 'Bands' which we have used in our analyses represent only the latest in a series of assessments made of the pupils by their teachers and communicated to them by the school. Over a period of years what went on in the classroom and the process of examination had made it clear to teachers, parents and pupils that some pupils were 'able', 'bright' or 'clever', others were 'average' or 'middle-of-the-road' and others again were 'less able', 'poor' or 'not very bright'. These categories tended to be regarded as more or less fixed or unchanging. Our enquiries have not simply illustrated the fairly obvious fact that such understandings existed, but have shown that, as far as the pupils in our samples were concerned, it was these understandings about ability which more than anything else affected the type of course they were going to pursue in their

subsequent schooling and their ideas about what they would do later on.

What has emerged is that within these schools, all of which were 'comprehensive' in some sense of that word, pupils were, from the end of their second year, set on different paths. In some of them there was a fairly inflexible system of streaming (although that term was not generally used). In others, arrangements were apparently more flexible, involving complex arrangements of 'certificate' and 'non-certificate' classes and a system of setting, but still representing a sorting of pupils on the basis of the same understandings. This sorting affected the kinds of subjects pupils studied and the level at which they studied them. The important point to be emphasised, however, is that for the most part this sorting took place 'naturally'. The pupils knew what their own ability level was, and opted for a course of study and tentatively planned a career for themselves on this basis. They sorted themselves out, taking their place within the school system and their anticipated place in the world after school as a matter of course.

If this account of the situation is acceptable, then two further things require to be said. The first is that it is important that teachers should realise how powerful and influential their assessments of pupils are. By their assessments, formal and informal, or by their communication, deliberate or unconscious, of these assessments, they have very considerable impact on the future course and life chances of their pupils. In view of this, it is incumbent upon teachers constantly to be questioning not only their assessments and judgments about individual pupils but also the assumptions on which these assessments are based. This did not appear to happen to any marked extent in the schools which participated in the study.

Secondly, it is of critical importance that the assessment of pupils' ability should not only be fair and just, but should take account of the whole range of their potential. It is a matter of concern that these assessments on which so much was based were so largely concerned with academic ability or performance. No one, of course, will dispute the value of academic excellence, and the need for schools to recognise, encourage and develop pupils' potential for that kind of excellence. The question at issue is whether other abilities, and the potential for other kinds of excellence are also adequately recognised, encouraged and developed within the schooling process.

It is true that in recent years there has been an increased recognition of the need to educate the whole person, and not simply develop his intellectual capacities. Some of the new courses and subjects which have been introduced into the curriculum (and which were discussed in Chapter 1) have been designed to meet this need. And the Munn Committee Report had advocated a greater emphasis

on physical, moral, social and aesthetic education. Nevertheless, it appears that it is still academic ability and performance which count in the shaping of the future of young people at this stage. Those pupils who are assessed as poor by academic criteria generally have a low estimate of themselves and of their potential.

Now it is no doubt impossible for schools to overturn a social system which places special value on and gives rewards to qualifications based on academic performance. But it is essential that they should pursue the educational task of diligently seeking out in each pupil whatever kinds of ability or potential he or she may have, and of developing that ability and potential as fully as possible. These may include manual and physical abilities, abilities in the artistic and aesthetic fields, the ability to organise, plan and lead, or to care and nurture. To develop such abilities requires a sensitivity to their existence, a close and sympathetic understanding of pupils by teachers and adequate and flexible practical arrangements within the schools. But most of all it demands that teachers should have a sense of the real value and worth of these abilities or qualities, and should communicate this to pupils and parents. Once again this did not appear to be happening to any considerable extent in the schools we have been studying. Overriding emphasis was still placed by the majority of teachers, pupils and parents on academic ability. Until much greater positive value is placed on the non-academic potential of pupils, they will continue to be routed, and to route themselves through and out of school largely on the basis of understandings and assumptions about their academic ability alone.

The less academic pupils

The next point follows on from what has just been said. There seemed to be in the schools a continued uncertainty about the type of curriculum and the type of teaching which are appropriate for the less academically able pupils. We speak of continued uncertainty because debate and argument, experiment and enquiry have been taking place on this topic for some decades. With the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen the problem became more acute. This was anticipated by the Scottish Education Department, which suggested guidelines for and encouraged the development of appropriate courses for those pupils who would have left at the age of fifteen, but were now to stay on for a further year (SED 1966 and 1970).

In spite of this, however, the teachers whom we interviewed were almost unanimous in the view that really appropriate courses for such pupils were not available in their schools. (The only significant exception was in the case of School 5 where many teachers were hopeful that the CSE courses which were then being started would meet their needs.) Two somewhat different approaches to the needs

of the less academic pupils were advocated by the teachers. Some felt that the emphasis should be on providing the same kinds of subjects as those studied by the more academic pupils, but at a simpler level. Others believed that a different type of curriculum should be available for them. The head teachers also took differing views on the topic. One argued that work of a different and special type appropriate to the needs of the less academic pupils could be done and was being done within an apparently traditional curriculum. Another believed that it was not possible to do anything really different, even by providing special courses, so long as they were taught by teachers with a traditional academic background. Others attempted to meet the problem with a mixture of special subjects and subjects taught at different levels.

These differences of view were reflected in the practical arrangements made in the various schools. Some, as we have seen, placed more emphasis on doing the same subject at different levels, and others tried to develop special subjects and courses for the non-academic pupils. The most significant attempt to come to terms with the problem within the schools in the project was the development of CSE courses in School 5. It is worth observing that these courses were made available to pupils of even the lowest assessed ability in the school. It was not part of our research to attempt an evaluation of these courses. But it was apparent that a determined and imaginative attempt to provide an answer to the needs of the less academic pupils was being made.

The practical arrangements in the other schools, however, still left most of the teachers interviewed feeling that the needs of the less academic pupils were not in fact being met. There was little evidence of experiment or innovative thought on the matter. And there was an obvious feeling of uncertainty and frustration amongst the staff about what should be done with such pupils.

We are raising this issue not with the intention of proposing a solution, but simply in order to re-emphasise that the problem still exists. The developments which have taken place in Scottish education in recent years and which we discussed in Chapter 1 — the change to a comprehensive system, the raising of the school leaving age, the introduction of some new subjects into the curriculum, and the development of guidance systems and careers education programmes — these have not as yet provided, within the schools we have studied, an adequate answer to the question of the type of curriculum or the type of education to be offered to the non-academic pupil. It may be that developments arising out of the proposals of the Munn and Dunning Committees could provide the basis for an answer. But, in view of the lack of really significant progress in this

area in recent years, one may be permitted to wonder whether an altogether more radical approach may be necessary.

Choice in the curriculum

Our studies of the course decision process in the eight schools led to two conclusions about the freedom and scope of choice. These were (a) that the options available to the less academically able pupils were more restricted than in the case of others; and (b) that pupils generally did not exercise a free and uninhibited choice ranging over all the apparent options, but 'chose' along the lines of existing assumptions and expectations, in a way that considerably limited the actual scope for choice. In the light of this, two important questions arise about choice in the curriculum. The first is: why should pupils be offered a choice of subjects? What is the purpose of choice in the curriculum? It may be viewed simply as a means of trying to ensure that all do the most appropriate course for them. On the other hand, it is possible to look on choice as itself part of the educational process. According to this view the ability to choose, and to take responsibility for one's choices, can be regarded as something which young people should be learning as part of their schooling. If this latter view is adopted, then it can be argued that people can only really learn to make choices if they are given the opportunity to make real choices. No one can learn to choose by having others choose for him.

This question arises most of all in connection with the academically less able pupils. We saw earlier not only that their scope for choice was more limited than others', but also that this was in some cases justified on the grounds that they were not *able* to choose. If the whole object of the course decision process were to ensure wise decisions, then some could argue that such decisions should be made *for* and not *by* the pupils. But if part of the purpose is to help them to learn to choose, then an opportunity for real choice should be given to them. It seems that the schools which restrict the choices of these pupils require to ask themselves on what grounds they do so, and what the purpose of choice in the curriculum really is.

The second question about choice in the curriculum is: is it possible to provide opportunities for genuinely free and significant choice? It may, of course, be argued that there are some parts of the curriculum which should not be open to choice. There is much to be said for a compulsory 'core-curriculum' which ensures that all pupils acquire certain knowledge and skills, and share in certain basic educational experiences. The question at issue is not whether there should be a compulsory core, but whether, in that part of the curriculum where choice is allowed, there can be a real, free and open choice from a fairly wide range of options.

The evidence from our enquiries suggests that even where it is part of official and recognised policy that choice should take place, and where elaborate subject choice procedures exist, it is still the case that choices are effectively restricted by assumptions and expectations which are built up within the schooling system. It follows that, if genuine and uninhibited choice is to take place, there must be a deliberate attempt to overcome these assumptions and expectations which restrict and channel the choices of pupils, and to allow the choices to be real choices, and not the automatic acceptance of what is expected. This would require an attempt on the part of the schools to examine and question the assumptions behind their choice procedures, to build into their option sheets (within the limits set by time-tabling) an area where pupils can genuinely choose whatever they wish, and also to develop procedures of curricular guidance which would encourage pupils to recognise and exercise free choice. Unless something like this is done, the danger is that choice will remain more nominal than real.

The Parents and the Schools

We reported earlier that the majority of the parents in our samples were not very much involved in the subject choice process. Not many of them felt able to discuss the matter meaningfully with their children and give detailed advice. We also saw that in general the parents did not seem to have exerted any considerable direct influence on the young peoples' ideas about the future at this stage. A significant exception to this was the group of parents who had spoken to their children about tertiary education, particularly university. On other matters, such as when the pupils proposed to leave school and the kind of jobs they had in mind, the parents mostly accepted the children's intentions. They also tended to accept the general assessment of their children's ability which had been communicated to them by the school. With few exceptions, they did not attempt to push their children, either in connection with their schooling or their longer term future. A very prevalent view among them was that the school knew best as far as the children's ability and appropriate subjects were concerned, and that it was right to let the young person think and decide for himself about his future, without parental pressure. This does not mean that parents who took this position had no influence on their children. But in very many cases the parents exerted a background influence, through the life and conversation of the home, rather than a direct influence through advice or pressure.

We also argued earlier that the lack of direct participation by many parents in the process of subject choice or in giving advice to their children did not mean they were uninterested in their schooling and their future. A large proportion of parents did come to meetings at

the schools which dealt with subject choice, even in those schools which served very scattered areas. And most of the parents, including many who did not attend these meetings, were very keen to talk to interviewers and tell them about their children and their schooling.

The key point in connection with the parents was that so many of them felt out of touch with the present-day education system. They did not understand the methods and procedures of the schools their children attended and some of the subjects in the current curriculum. The very large majority of them had left school themselves at or before the age of fifteen. Often they felt uneasy about going to the school or talking to teachers.

It was very obvious that a considerable gap existed between the schools and many of the parents. Most of the teachers were aware of this gap, but frequently it was attributed to apathy and lack of interest on the part of parents. In general the school authorities were keen to attract more parents to meetings and activities at the school and regretted the fact that a number of parents did not attend these, or come to consult with teachers.

In our view, however, the gap between schools and parents did not lie in the fact that some parents did not attend meetings, nor was it caused by lack of interest on the part of parents. The gap was one of communication and understanding. As we have said many parents did not understand what went on at school, and often had difficulty with the schools' written communications, some of which were written in an unfamiliar style and at too great length. It also became clear during the course of many interviews in which parents told the interviewer what they felt about their children's education, that they had never spoken to a teacher in this way. On the other hand many teachers also seemed to misunderstand the position and views of those parents who did not attend events in the school.

It is easier to recognise this gap in understanding and communication than to propose a remedy. More efficiently organised parents' nights and lively parents-teachers associations may be valuable but do not overcome the problem. In those cases where the gap of communication and understanding is greatest, the parents do not attend activities of this kind. All we can do here is to suggest a possible starting point for attempts at a solution to the problem. We have discovered that, even where the parents felt far removed from the school, many of them were keen to talk about their children and their schooling. Perhaps an attempt to bridge the gap of understanding could begin by seeking to provide fuller opportunities for parents to talk and be listened to about their child. All too often it is assumed that when parents meet teachers it is for the teacher to tell the parents about their child. It could be that an effort to listen to each pair of parents and learn from them something of what they

know, understand and feel about their child could provide a better basis for a relationship between school and parents in which two-way communication can take place. There are clearly many difficulties and questions about how this could be done in practice. Not least of these is the question of where this kind of contact between teachers and parents could take place. Our purpose here is not to try to answer such questions but merely to suggest that personal contact, interest in the individual and a listening ear could provide the key to overcoming the gap of understanding and communication between parents and schools.

Guidance and the individual

We come finally to the point we wish to emphasise most of all. This is the need for more adequate arrangements by which each individual pupil will be personally known and understood by at least one member of staff in the school. We have seen in the earlier chapters that in most of the schools it was not possible to undertake individual interviews in connection with subject choice. And while guidance teachers were generally aware of the importance of personal contact with individual pupils, most of them did not have the time or opportunity to do the amount of individual interviewing they would like to have done. Our studies have convinced us that the most important step which can be taken towards solving the difficulties which have merged in connection with the stage of schooling under review would be to enable someone in the school to have substantial and significant personal contact with each pupil.

In our discussion of subject choice we have stressed the importance of trying to uncover the latent potential in pupils, and in particular the aptitudes, interests and potential skills of a non-academic nature which they may have. The Scottish Education Department's original document about guidance systems (SED 1968) emphasises that curricular guidance can only be done on the basis of a knowledge of the individual pupil, and of the pupil's knowledge of himself. It urges that the pupil's attention should be drawn "to ways in which his own predilections show", and suggests that account should be taken of pupils' reading habits, outdoor activities, leisure pursuits and vocational leanings. It is hard to see how this can be done without the kind of personal contact with pupils for which guidance teachers did not have adequate time in the schools involved in this study. We have also argued above that choices are frequently not genuinely free and uninhibited but are rather a falling into line with accepted assumptions and expectations. If, as we believe, it is desirable not simply that pupils should take the most appropriate subjects but also that they should learn to, and have opportunity to exercise real and responsible choice, then it is important that someone should sit down

with each pupil, examining with him his needs, wishes and potential, and help him to make his own decisions in the light of all possible options.

In our study of the intentions of the young people at this stage with regard to leaving school and entering work or further education, it became clear that the school exerted very little direct influence on these intentions, other than through the assessment of their ability. The pupils' ideas about their future work or education were largely derived from some meaningful part of their experience outwith the school. It was through aspects of life which had struck them in some way, or through personal contact with people who were significant to them that their intentions were developed. On the basis of this we would argue that if their school education is to help pupils in the formation of their intentions, what is required in the early stages is not so much more formal programmes of careers education, but a more real attempt on the part of someone in the school to become meaningfully part of the pupil's world and a significant part of his personal experience. As Hill has pointed out in his study in depth of vocational development, a personal relationship between a young person and an older person is potentially significant for the development of vocational maturity (Hill 1969). So for this reason too it is important that members of staff in the schools should attempt to develop such relationships with their pupils.

To these points we may add that our emphasis on the need for more personal contact and a more listening relationship between teachers and parents is built upon an assumption that the teachers concerned will have a personal knowledge and sympathetic understanding of the pupils concerned. One of the complaints of many parents was that teachers did not seem to know their child. If personal relations are to be developed between teachers and parents they must be based on a mutual knowledge of the child. This again would require more opportunities for individual contact between a particular teacher and each pupil.

As was pointed out in Chapter 1, part of the purpose of the establishment of formal guidance systems in Scottish secondary schools was to ensure that each pupil within the large comprehensive school was personally known and his needs understood. Our enquiries made it clear that teachers generally felt that this was one of the most important reasons for having a guidance system. But teachers, both those with a responsibility for guidance and others, frequently stressed that it was extremely difficult to fulfill this aim. The problem to do with guidance which was most frequently mentioned was that of inadequate time to do the job as it was envisaged. Many guidance teachers lamented the fact that they got to know the 'problem c...ldren' and some of the bright or outstanding

children, but did not have sufficient opportunity to get to know the others.

This problem of shortage of time arose partly because of the way in which guidance systems and guidance teachers were viewed and used. There was in these schools a danger of guidance becoming simply part of the machinery of processing pupils through the school system. We have seen that in most of the schools, and particularly in one or two of them, guidance teachers spent a considerable amount of time trying to bring back into line those who were resisting the schooling system by undiscipline or truancy; and that much of their time was also taken up with paper work and other routine or administrative activities. Frequently their part in the course decision process was one of helping to fit pupils into the appropriate slot. One of the grave dangers facing schools today is that in a society of large impersonal organisations they should themselves become impersonal processing machines, through which young people are passed as smoothly as possible. As others have pointed out it is all too easy for guidance, even when it is thought of as counselling (Cicourel and Kitsuse 1963), to become a means whereby the processing is made more smooth, rather than a means of overcoming the impersonality and the manipulative tendencies inherent in a large institution (Law and Watts 1977). Our enquiries have convinced us that the pressure on guidance teachers to do tasks which assist and smooth the schooling process, are frequently such that they leave them with little opportunity to develop a personal knowledge and understanding of the pupils who are moving through the process.

All in all it was apparent that in these schools, with the possible exception of the smallest of them, the guidance systems were not adequate to achieving this aim. We suspect that the same is true of many other large comprehensives. It follows that if the ideal of guidance that every young person should be personally known, understood and helped is to be achieved, current arrangements will need to be altered. This could be done in more than one way. One approach would be to attempt to involve more members of staff and to spread this aspect of the guidance function more widely. In our opinion a more fruitful approach would be to allow guidance teachers more time to concentrate on personal contact and establishing real relationships by relieving them of their administrative organisational and disciplinary duties. Provided that guidance teachers were well selected, this approach would also seem to hold out more hope of overcoming another and more fundamental obstacle to the establishment of personal relationships of trust, namely the gulf of authority and age which lies between teacher and pupil.

Our principal concern, however, is not to advocate one particular

practical solution, but rather to emphasise the basic need. If the intentions underlying the changes in the education system which we discussed in the first chapter are to be realized, it is essential that the extended schooling process and the large educational institutions which have been developed should have at their heart a relationship in which each individual is personally known and understood, and his or her potential appreciated and encouraged to develop. This would seem to provide the only firm basis for attempting to overcome the problems in the schooling process which have emerged in our study of these eight schools.

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INDEX

academic ability, emphasis on, 4, 127
Allen, S, 7
analysis of data, 12
assumptions affecting choices, 80

band, representing performance, 28, Chap. 3 *passim*, 90, 110, 126
Bellaby, P, 80n
Borders area, 19, 107, 123
Bourdieu, P, 80
Brunton Committee, 4

careers education, 7, 17, 105
careers guidance, 7
careers libraries, 15, 32, 106
careers officers, 15, 32, 33, 34, 37, 106
careers teachers, 20, 21, 22, 23, 35
Census 1971, 20n, 107, 109
changes in subjects studied, 50
choices:
  friends' influence on, 58
  parents' influence on, 57, 59
  pupils' reasons for, 53
  teachers' influence on, 57, 68
Cicourel A V, 135
comprehensive schooling, 1, 127
criteria for teachers' advice, 73
CSE courses, 35, 47, 71, 128
curricular guidance, 68, 133
curriculum, 3, 37

Davies, B, 2, 80
DES on curriculum, 83n
differentiation in schools, 1, 127

Eggleston, J, 2, 3, 80

fantasy in job choice, 100, 112
fathers' occupational level, 24, 63, 91, 112
Findlay, I R, 4
footsteps, following in parents', 114
Ford, J, 2
freedom of choice, 9, 31, 56
friends' influence on choice, 58
further education, 8, 13, 115

Ginzberg, E, 99
guidance, need for individual, 133
guidance systems,
  description of, 14ff
  establishment of, 5
guidance teachers:
  accommodation available to, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24
  appointment of, 5
  disciplinary responsibilities, 17, 21, 24
  time available to, 15, 18, 134

Haystead, J, 7
Hill, J M M, 134
Hopper, E, 2

individual interviewing as part of guidance, 15ff, 33-36, 69-73
industry, intention to enter, 107
interview programme, 12

Jackson, B, 68n
job intentions, 94
  how arrived at, 114

Kitsuse, J I, 135

Law, B, 6, 135
Lawton, D, 2, 3
Lanarkshire area, 13, 107, 123
leaving school, 4, 89

McDowell, R J, 6
Maizels, J, 105n
Marsden, D, 68n
Miller, J, 6
Munn Committee, 3, 127, 129

Nash, R, 80n
Nolan, F, 113
non-academic pupils, 4, 5, 35, 36, 47, 84, 128

occupational choice, 6, 7, 99ff
omnibus schools, 1, 19
opportunities, structure of, 7, 106
option forms, 37
orders of subjects, 46

parents and the schools, 67, 131
parents' educational level, 24, 28
parents' expectations:
  about jobs, 112
  about school leaving, 94
parents' influence:
  towards jobs, 113, 131
  towards TE, 121, 131
parents interviews with, 59
parents' meetings:
  arrangements for, 32ff
  attendance at, 64, 132
  view of, 66
parents' part in subject choice, 31ff, 59, 131
parents, subjects recommended by, 64

raising of school leaving age, 4, 128
reasons for pupils' choices, 54
records, keeping of, 15

Reid, M I, 6, 9, 68n
Richmond, K, 4
Roberts, K, 7
Robertson, T S, 2
Ross, J M, 2
Ryrie, A C, 113

samples, size and nature of, 11, 24
schools,
  description of, 13ff
  size of, 5, 13ff, 135
Scottish Education Department Publications,
  on comprehensive schooling, 1
  on guidance, 5, 6, 133
  on promoted posts, 5
  on raising of leaving age, 4, 128
sex differences in subjects studied, 48, 82
Sex Discrimination Act, 1, 8, 109n
Shipman, M D, 2
Smith, I, 6
social education, 15ff, 32ff
sources of ideas about jobs, 101
subject choice:
  and the curriculum, 3
  as differentiation, 2
  and further education, 8
  and guidance, 6
  and the less academic pupil, 5
  procedures for, 13
subject teachers' part in subject choice, 73

teachers' influence on TE expectations, 121
teachers' part in subject choice, 68
technical colleges, 117
Thomas, R, 80n
'touting' for pupils, 76
transition from school to work, 6
travel to work, 13, 19, 20, 23

unemployment, 1, 7, 13, 16, 110
university, intention to enter, 117, 119

Veness, T, 105n

Watts, A G, 6, 135
Weir, A D, 113
Wetherell, D, 80n
Woods, P, 9

Young, M, 3

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